

# Justification by Faith Alone - Part 1

by C.H. Spurgeon

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*C.H. Spurgeon's sermon emphasizes that justification is achieved solely through faith in Jesus Christ, highlighting the importance of recognizing our sinfulness and reliance on God's grace.*

**Duration:** 39:46

**Topics:** "Justification By Faith", "Gods Grace"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of being justified in the sight of God. He explains that no one can achieve true righteousness through their own obedience because of the sin of mankind. However, God has chosen to show mercy and forgive all offenses, bestowing His love and grace upon those who believe in Him. The preacher uses the analogy of a broken chain to illustrate that our obedience is measured by its weakest point, and since all of us have failed in obedience, none of us can be just before God. He encourages listeners to recognize their need for justification and to find peace with God through His love and grace.

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## Transcript

Welcome again to Spurgeon on Tape, read by W. J. Mincaro. The information for ordering tapes will be given at the end of the message. Today's sermon is entitled, Justification by Faith.

It was delivered by Charles H. Spurgeon at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in Newington on Lord's Day evening, April 28, 1867. Our text is Romans, chapter 5, verse 1. Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. May the Lord bless the reading of his word.

We desire this evening not to preach upon this text as a mere matter of doctrine. You all believe and understand the gospel of justification by faith, but we want to preach upon it tonight as a matter of experience, as a thing realized, felt, enjoyed, and understood in the soul. I trust there are many here who not only know that men may be saved and justified by faith, but who can say in their own experience, Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and who now are at the present moment walking and living in the actual enjoyment of that peace.

Wishing to speak of the text then in this sense, I shall ask you to accompany me, not only with your ears, and with the attention which you usually give so generously, but also with the eye of your self-examination, asking yourselves as we proceed step by step, Do I know that? Have I received that? Have I been taught of God in this manner? Have I been led into that truth? And our hope will be that some person to whom

these things have hitherto been merely external, therefore valueless, may be led by God to get a hold of them, so that they may be matters of soul and heart and conscience, so that they may enjoy them, to find themselves where once they feared they would never be, namely, in a state of reconciliation with God, happily enjoying peace with the Most High. Our first few thoughts shall be some plain earnest talk concerning a few preliminary discoveries which a man makes before he gets peace with God. These, I do not think, are any foreign means to the text or merely imported to it, but they belong rightfully to it.

You see that Paul, before he came to this justification by faith, had been speaking about sin. It would not have been possible for him to have given an intelligible definition of justification without mentioning that men are sinners, without informing them that they had broken God's holy law and that the law by and of itself could never restore them to the favor of God. Now, some of these things of which I am going to speak are absolutely necessary, if not to my sermon, yet certainly to your spiritually understanding, even so much as one jot or tittle of what it is to be justified by faith.

Well, what are these things? The first discovery that a man is led by the Spirit of God to make before he is justified is that it is important to be justified in the sight of God. Now, many people do not know this. You shall step into a shop this evening, find a man at the counter, and you say to him, Well, do you never go to a place of worship? No, he would say, but I am quite as good as those who do.

Well, how so? Well, I am a great deal better than some of them. Well, how is that? Well, I never fail in business. I never dupe people in a limited liability company.

I never told lies. I am no thief. I am not a drunkard.

I am as honest as the days are long in the middle of June. That is more than you can say of some of your religious people. Now, that man has got a hold of one part of a good man's character.

There are two parts, but he can only see one, namely, that man is to be just to man. Now, he sees that, but he does not see that man is to be also just to God. And yet, if that man were to really think a little while, he would see that the highest obligations of the creature must be not to his fellow creatures, but to his Creator.

And that, however just a man may be to another man, yet if he be altogether unjust to God, he cannot escape without the severest penalty. But, oh, the most of men think that so long as they keep the laws of the land, so long as they give to their fellow men their due, it matters not though God's day should be a subject of scorn, God's will be used as men will, and God's law trodden under their feet. Now, I think that everyone here will but put his fingers to his brow for a moment and think that he will see that even though a man may go before the bar of his country and say before any judge or jury, I have nothing injured my fellow man, I am just before men, yet it does not make the man's character perfect, unless he is also able to say, and I am also just before the presence of the God who made me and whose servant I am.

He has only kept one half, and that the less important of God's law for him. It cannot help being, it must be, important to the highest degree that you and I should stand on good terms with the great God unto whom we shall so soon return in the great day, when he shall say, return ye children of men. We must then render up our souls to him who created us.

Well, you can surely go as far as that with me, that it is necessary. You do feel, do you not, a desire in your heart to be just before your maker? I am thankful that you can go so far. The next thing is this.

A man, when the Spirit of God is bringing him to Christ, discovers that his past life has been marred badly by serious offenses against the law of God. Before the Spirit of God comes into our soul, we are like being in a room in the dark. We cannot see in it.

We cannot discover the cobwebs, the spiders, the foul and loathsome things that might be lurking there. But when the Spirit of God comes streaming into the soul, the man is astonished to find that he is what he is, especially if he sits down and opens the book of the law, and in the light of the divine Spirit reads that perfect law and compares with it his own imperfect heart and life. He will then grow sick of himself, even to loathing, and sometimes despair.

Take but one command. Now perhaps there are some here who will say, I know I have been very chaste all my life, for the command saith, Thou shalt not commit adultery, and I have never broken it. I am clean there.

Aye, but now hear Christ explain the command. He that looketh upon a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. Now then, who amongst us can say that we have not done that? Who is there upon earth, if that be the meaning of the command, who can say, I am innocent? If the law of God, as we are told by Scripture, has to deal not with our outward actions alone, but with our words and with our thoughts and with our imaginations, if it is so exceeding broad that it applies to the most secret part of a man, then who of us can plead guiltless before the throne? No, dear brethren, this must be understood by you and by me before we can be justified that we are full of sin.

What if I say that we are full of sin as an egg is full of meat? We are all sin. The imagination and the thought of our heart is evil, and only evil, and that continually. If some of you plume yourselves with the notion that you are righteous, I pray God to pluck those fine feathers off you and make you see yourselves.

For if you never see your own nothingness, you will never understand Christ's all-sufficiency. Unless you are pulled down, Christ will never lift you up. Unless you know yourself to be lost, you'll never care for that Savior who came to seek and to save the lost.

That's a second discovery, then, that it's important to be just before God. But then, that on account of the spirituality of God's moral law and our consequent inability to keep it perfectly, we are very far from standing in that position. Then there comes another discovery, namely, that consequently it is utterly impossible for us to hope that we can be ever just before God on the footing of our own doing.

We must give it up now as an utterly lost case. The past is past. That can never be by us blotted out.

And the present, insomuch as we are weak through the flesh, is not much better than the past. And the future, notwithstanding all our fond hopes of improvement, will probably be none the better. And so, salvation by the works of the law becomes to us a dreary impossibility.

I was conversing on one occasion with one of our most illustrious Jewish noblemen. When I put to him the question, he believed himself to be perfectly righteous. And I believe if any man could be so by his moral conduct, he might have fairly laid claim to it.

But when I said to him, Now there is your own law for it. Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them. Have you continued in all things? He said, I have not.

Then I said, the curse is upon you. How do you hope to escape from it? And I found that to be a question for which he, at any rate, had no answer. And it's a question which, when properly understood, no man can answer, except by pointing to the cross of Christ and saying, He was made a curse for us that we might be made a blessing.

Unless you and I keep the law of God perfectly, it matters little how near we get to perfection. It is as though God had committed to our trust a perfect crystal vase, and said, If you keep that whole, and present it to me, you shall have a reward. But we've cracked it.

We've chipped it. Ah, my brethren, the most of us have broken it and smashed it to pieces. But we will suppose we've only cracked it a little.

Yes, but even then we've lost the reward, for the condition was that it should be perfectly whole. And the slightest chip is a violation of the condition upon which the reward would have been given. Never you say that you will not break it further.

Nay, you have broken it. You've thrown yourself now out of the list. It seems hard sometimes when you tell people that if they've violated the law on one point, they've broken the whole law.

But it is not so hard as it looks to be. For if I tell a man who's going down a coal mine on a long chain, that if he breaks one link of the chain, it doesn't matter, though all the other hundreds or thousands of links may be sound. If there's only one link that's broken, down will descend the basket, and the poor miner be dashed to pieces.

Now nobody thinks that to be hard. Everybody recognizes it's being a matter of mechanical law. The strength of a chain must be measured by its weakest part.

And so the strength of our obedience must be gauged by the very point on which it fails. And alas, our obedience has failed, and through it not one of us can ever be just before God. I want to stop a minute and put the question around the galleries and below the stairs.

Have you all got as far as that it is important to be just before God? Now we see that we're not so. Do we see that we cannot be so? Are we quite convinced that by our own obedience to the law of God, it is hopeless for us to think of standing accepted before the Most High? I pray the Eternal Spirit to convince you all of this, for you will keep on knocking at the door until you're quite sure that God has nailed it up forever. And you'll go scrambling over that alp and tumbling down this precipice until you're convinced that it is impossible for you to climb it.

And then you will give up your desperate endeavor and come to God in God's way, which is quite another way from your own. I trust that we're all convinced of this. Let us notice one more preliminary discovery.

A man, having found out all this, suddenly discovers that, in so much as he is not just before God and cannot be, he is, at the present moment, under condemnation. God is never indifferent towards sin. If, therefore, a man be not in a state in which God can justify him, he is in a state in which God must condemn him.

If you're not just before God, you are condemned at this very moment. You're not executed, it's true, but the condemnation has gone forth against you. And the sign that it is so is your unbelief.

For Scripture says, He that believeth not is condemned already, because he has not believed on the Son of God. How some of you would spring up from your seats tonight if all of a sudden you got the information that you had been condemned by the courts of your country. But when I say that you've been condemned by the court of heaven, this glides across your conscience like drops of water or oil over a marble slab.

And yet my hearers, if thou didst but know the meaning of what I'm saying, and I pray God the Holy Ghost to make thee know it, he would make thy very bones to quiver. God has condemned thee. Thou art out of Christ.

Thou hast broken his law. God has lifted his hand to smite thee. And though his mercy tarries for a while, yet days and hours will soon be gone, and then the condemnation shall take the shape of execution.

And where will thy soul be then? Now you must have the sentence of condemnation passed in your own soul, or else you will never be justified. For until we are condemned by ourselves, we are not acquitted by God. Again I pause and say, Dost thou feel this, my dear hearer? If thou dost, instead of despairing, be hopeful.

If thou hast the sentence of death within thee, be thankful for it. For now shall life be given thee from the hand of God's grace. Well, having occupied perhaps too much time over that, we now come to more immediately into the text, to show us the gospel learning which is taught to us by the Spirit of God, which is our second point.

That gospel learning I may give you in a few sentences, namely these, that inasmuch as through man's sin the way of obedience is forever closed, so that we, none of us, can ever pass by it to a true righteousness, God has now determined to deal with men in a way of mercy, to forgive them all their offenses, to bestow upon them His love, to receive them graciously, and to love them freely. He has been pleased in His infinite wisdom to devise a way by which, without injury to His justice, He can yet receive the most undeserving sons of men into His heart and make them His children, and can bless them with all the blessings which would have been theirs had they perfectly kept God's law, but which now shall come to them as a matter of gift and undeserved grace from Himself. I trust we have learned that, that there is a plan of salvation by grace, and by grace alone, and it is a great thing to know that where grace is, there are no works.

It is a blessed thing never to muddle in your head the doctrine of working and the doctrine of receiving by grace, for there is an essential and eternal difference between the two. I hope you all know that there can be no mixing of the two. If we are saved by grace, it cannot be by our own merits, but if we depend upon our own merits, then we cannot appeal to the grace of God, since the two things can never be mingled together.

It must be all works, or else all grace. Now God's plan of salvation excludes all our works. Scripture saith, Not of works, lest any man should boast.

It comes to us upon the footing of grace, pure grace alone. And this is God's plan, namely, that inasmuch as we cannot be saved by our own obedience, we should be saved by Christ's obedience. Jesus, the Son of God, has appeared in the flesh, has lived a life of obedience to God's law, and in consequence of that obedience, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Our Savior's life and death make up a complete keeping and honoring of that law which we have broken and dishonored. And God's plan is this. I cannot bless you for your own sakes, but I will bless you for His sake.

And now, looking at you through Him, I can bless you, though you deserve it not. I can pass by your undeserving. I can blot out your sins like a cloud and cast your iniquities into the depths of the sea through what He has done.

You have no merits, but He has boundless merits. You are full of sin and must be punished, but He's been punished instead of you, and now I can deal with you. Now, this is the language of God put into human words.

I can deal with you upon terms of mercy through the merits of my dear Son. This is the way in which the gospel comes to you, then. If you believe in Jesus, that is to say, if you trust Him, all the merits of Jesus are your merits.

They are imputed to you. All the sufferings of Jesus are your sufferings. Every one of His merits is imputed to you.

You stand before God as if you were Christ, because Christ stood before God as if He were you. He in your stead, you in His stead. Substitution, that's the word.

Christ the substitute for sinners. Christ standing for men and bearing the thunderbolts, the divine opposition to all sin. He being made sin for us who knew no sin.

Man standing in Christ's place and receiving the sunlight of divine favor instead of Christ. And this, I say, is through trusting or believing. God's way of your getting connection with Christ is through your reliance upon Him.

Therefore, being justified, Scripture sayeth. How? Not by works. That is not the link.

But being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ offers to God the substitution. Through faith, we accept it.

And from that moment, God accepts us. Now, I want to come to this, dear friends. Do you know this? Have you been taught this by the Spirit of God? Perhaps you learned it in the assembly's catechism when you were but children.

You've learned it in the various classes since then. But do you know it in your own soul? And do you know that God's way of salvation is through a simple dependence upon His dear Son? Do you so know it that you have accepted it? And that you are now resting upon Jesus? If so, then thrice happy are you. But going further, I have now to dwell for a minute or two upon our third point, the glorious privilege of the text.

We have led you, and I hope the Spirit of God has led you too, through the preliminary discoveries and through the great discovery that God can save us through the merits of another. And now let us notice this glorious privilege word by word. Being justified.

The text tells us that every believing man is at the present moment perfectly justified before God. Now, you know what Adam was in naked innocence in paradise. Such is every believer.

Aye, and more than that, Adam could talk with God because he was pure from sin. And we also have access with boldness under God our Father because through Jesus' blood we are clean. Now, I do not say that this is the privilege of a few eminent saints, but here I look around these pews and see my brethren and sisters, scores and hundreds of them, all of whom tonight are just before God.

Perfectly so. Completely so. So just that they can never be otherwise than just.

So just that even in heaven they will be no more acceptable to God than they are here tonight. Now, that is the state into which faith brings a poor, lost, guilty, helpless, good-for-nothing sinner. The man may have been everything that was bad before he believed in Jesus.

But as soon as he trusted Christ, the merits of Christ became his merits, and he stands before God as though he were perfect, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, through the righteousness of Christ. Note, however, as we have noticed the state of justification, the means whereby we reach it, being justified by faith. And the way of reaching the state of justification is not by tears, is not by prayers, nor humblings, nor working, nor Bible reading, nor church going, nor chapel going, nor sacraments, nor priestly absolution, but by faith.

Which faith is a simple and utter dependence and believing in the faithfulness of God. A dependence upon the promise of God. Because it is God's promise, and is worthy of dependence.

It is a reliance with all our might upon what God has said. This is faith, and every man who possesses this faith is perfectly justified tonight. I know what the devil will say to you.

He'll say to you, you're a sinner. Tell him you know you are. But that for all that you are, you are justified.

He will tell you of the greatness of your sin. Tell him of the greatness of Christ's righteousness. He will tell you of all your mishaps, and your backslidings, your offenses, and your wanderings.

Tell him, and tell your own conscience, that you know all that. But that Jesus Christ came to save sinners. And that, although your sin be great, Christ is quite able to put it all away.

Some of you, it seems to me, do not trust in Christ as sinners. You get a mangle-mangle kind of faith. You trust in Christ as though you thought Christ could do something for you.

And you could do the rest. I tell you that while you look to yourselves, you do not know what faith means. You must be convinced that there is nothing good in yourselves.

You must know that you are sinners. And that in your hearts you are as big and as black sinners as the very worst and vilest. And you must come to Jesus and leave your fancied righteousness and your pretended goodnesses behind you.

And you must take Him for everything and trust in Him. Oh, to feel your sin and yet to know your righteousness. To have the two together.

Repentance on account of sin, and yet a glorious confidence in the all-atoning sacrifice. Oh, if you could understand the saying of the spouse, I am black but comely, for that is where we must come. Black in myself, as black as hell.

And yet comely, fair, lovely, inexpressibly glorious through the righteousness of Jesus. My dear brethren and sisters, can you feel this? If you cannot feel it, do you believe it? And do you sing in the words of Joseph Hart? In thy surety thou art free. His dear hands were pierced for thee.

With thy Savior's vesture on, holy as the Holy One. For so it is. You stand before God as accepted as Christ is accepted.

And notwithstanding the inbred sin and corruption of your heart, you are as dear to God as Christ is dear. And as accepted in the righteousness of Christ as Christ is accepted in his own obedience. Have we got so far? That is the point on which I want to inquire this evening.

Have you got as far as to know at this moment that it is through faith that we are justified? If so, I shall conduct you just one step further. Namely, to observe, and this is coming back whilst it all goes forward, that we are justified by faith through our Lord Jesus Christ. Now there is the foundation.

There is the mainspring. There is the tree that bears the fruit. We are justified by faith, but not a faith of itself.

Now faith in itself is a precious grace, but it cannot in itself justify us. It is through our Lord Jesus Christ. Now simple as the observation is, I must venture to repeat it tonight because it is hard for us to keep it in mind.

But remember that faith is not the work of the spirit within, but the work of Christ upon the tree. That upon which I must rest as my meritorious hope is not the blessed fact that I am now an heir of heaven, but the still more blessed fact that the Son of God loved me and gave himself for me. My dear brethren, when all is fair weather within, there is such a temptation to say, well now it is all right with me for I feel this and I feel that.

Now very good these evidences are in their places, but evidences, you get equally clear evidences that you are not perfect. When you have to say, oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? You will find that instead of your beautiful evidences, you will have to fly to the cross. There was a time when I too could take a great deal of comfort in what I believe is the spirit of God's work in my soul.

Now I do thank God for it and bless him for it now. But I trust I have learned to walk where poor Jack the Huckster walked. I am a poor sinner and nothing at all, but Jesus Christ is my all in all.

Brethren, it is down on the ground that we must live. We must build upon the rock itself. On the top of some mountains men sometimes build heaps of timber so as to get a little higher.

Well now some of these rickety platforms, you know, get shaky. But when you get right down on the mountain itself, that never shakes and you are perfectly secure there. So sometimes we get building up our rickety platforms of our experience and our good works, all very well on their way, but then they shake in the storm.

Depend upon it that the soul that clings to the rock, notwithstanding all that the Holy Spirit has done for it and having nothing then to depend upon more than the poor dying robber had when without a single good work he had to hang on the dying Christ alone. Oh believe me, that soul is in the safest place to live in, Jesus. For a poor sinner, when he is torn from his cups and his sins, and none but Jesus for the age of

saint, when he stays himself upon his bed to bear his last testimony, nothing in my hands I bring, simply to thy cross I cling.

Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. And now to crown all, there is here the precious, precious privilege which such men enjoy, we have peace with God. I know that this may seem a trifle to thoughtless people, but not to those who think.

I cannot say that I sympathize with those people who shut their eyes to the beauties of nature. I have heard of good men traveling through fine scenery and shutting their eyes for fear they should see. I always open mine as wide as ever I can, because I think I can see God in all the works of his hands, and what God has taken the trouble to make, I think I ought to take the trouble to look at.

Surely there must be something to see in a man's works if he be a wise man, and there must be something worth seeing in the works of God, who is all wise. Now it's a delightful thing to say when you look upon a landscape lit up with sunlight and shaded with cloud, well, my father made all this. I never saw him, but I do delight in the work of his hands.

He made all this, and I am perfectly at peace with him. Then as you are standing there, a storm comes on. Big drops begin to fall.

There's thunder in the distance. It begins to peal louder and louder. Presently there comes a lightning flash.

Now those who are not at peace with God may go and flee away, but those who are perfectly at peace with him may stand there and say, well, it's my father who's doing all this. That is his voice, the voice of the Lord, which is full of majesty. I love to hear my father's voice.

I never am so happy as in a tremendous storm when the lightning flash comes. I think, well, it's only the flashing of my father's eye. Now God is abroad.

He seemed as if he had left the world before, but now he comes riding on the wings of the wind. Let me go and meet him. I'm not afraid.

Suppose you're out at sea in a storm. You're justified by faith. And you say, well, let the waves roar.

Let them clap their hands. My father holds the waters in the hollow of his hand. Why should I be afraid? Let me say to you that it is worth something to believe that God can put us in a calm state of mind when Earth is all in arms abroad.

It is just so with the believer when temporal troubles come. There comes crash after crash until it seems as though every house of business would come down. Nothing is certain.

Man has lost confidence and reliance in his fellow man. Everything is going to the bad. But the Christian says, God is at the helm.

The whole business of business is managed by the great king. Let the sons of Earth do as they will, but he everywhere hath sway, and all things serve his might. It is something to feel that my father cannot do me a bad turn.

Even if he should use his rod upon me, it will do me good, and I will thank him for it, for I am at perfect peace with him. And then to come to die, and to feel, I am going to God, and I am glad to go, for I am not going like a prisoner to a judge, but like a wife, a spouse goes to her husband, like a child home from school to the parents' arms. Oh, it is something to die with a sense of peace with God.

Surely every thoughtful man will feel that. Now if you trust Christ, you shall be justified by faith. Being justified, your heart shall feel that perfect peace is brought into it, so that you shall meet your father's will with perfect equanimity.

Let it be what it may. Come life, come death, it shall not matter to you, for all is right between God and your souls. Oh, I wish it were so with all present.

It may be so if God the Spirit brings you to rest in Jesus. Nay, it shall be so, my dear friend. It shall be so with you tonight.

Though you never thought it would be when you came in here, yet you see it all now. It is simply believing, simply trusting. Oh, believe Him.

Trust Him, and it shall be the joy of your soul to have a peace with God, which, as the world did not give you, so the world shall never take away. But you shall have it forever and ever. God grant it to each one of us.

Amen. Contact Stillwater's Revival Books. On the Internet, we are at [www.swrv.com](http://www.swrv.com). By email, we are at [swrv@swrv.com](mailto:swrv@swrv.com). Our mailing address is 4710-37A Avenue, Edmonton, that's E-D-M-O-N-T-O-N, Alberta, abbreviated capital A, capital B, Canada, T-6-L-3-T-5.

By phone, 403-450-3730. After February of 1999, our area code will change. We can be reached by phone at 780-450-3730.

And keep in mind that William Hetherington, commenting on the Solemn League and Covenant, the epitome of Second Reformation attainments, in his History of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, 1856 edition, page 134, writes, No man who is able to understand its nature and to feel and appreciate its spirit and aim will deny it to be the wisest, the sublimest, and the most sacred document ever framed by uninspired men.

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