

From Wretchedness to Rejoicing

by H.J. Vine

This sermon explores the transformative journey from wretchedness to rejoicing through the justification and acceptance found in Jesus Christ.

Scripture: Psalm 16:11, John 5:24, John 16:22, Romans 4:25, Romans 8:33, Ephesians 1:6, Ephesians 2:4, Jude 1:1

Topics: "Justification By Faith", "Eternal Salvation"

Description

H.J. Vine preaches about the profound truth of God's righteousness and grace revealed in the Scriptures, where the condemned are justified, the forsaken are accepted, and the dead are made alive through the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ. The sermon emphasizes how believers are righteously cleared of condemnation, brought into eternal favor with God, and granted access to His presence through faith in Christ's atoning sacrifice. It highlights the joy and fullness of life that believers experience in knowing God as their Father and being alive in His eternal love and acceptance.

Transcript

How often the daily records speak of a Judge justly sentencing some guilty wretch to the punishment he deserves; but where is to be found the record of a Judge who arranged for a condemned man's punishment to be borne by another and then took him, a new man, to his happy home as one of his own family? In human annals we know of no such story; but the truth of God in the inspired Scriptures tells of this, only in a far more wonderful and glorious way; showing how the one who is condemned before God, by Him is righteously justified, accepted and brought into everlasting favour and rejoicing, able to truly know Him, and call Him "Father." No wonder the truth is termed, "Tidings of great joy!"

CONDEMNED: JUSTIFIED

With every upright and rational person, the truth of the Word must be admitted, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." This is recorded by the Holy Spirit, and proved in our experience to be true. God, the righteous Judge of all, being holy, must necessarily condemn sin, and its righteous sentence must be borne. It was a great day, a most searching day, full of serious and eternal importance, when we were brought to face this fact, encouraged by the sense that God was merciful as well as just. The thought of banishment from His presence to the realms of eternal woe--the lake of fire--was indeed dreadful; but the thought of God's grace and goodness sustained confidence that He would bless somehow.

How could He do so righteously? Had He some way of doing so without sacrificing His justice and holiness? Could the condemnation be borne, and yet the condemned be brought justified into divine favour and acceptance? Yes, Yes, Yes; thanks be to God; and the Spirit has recorded how, so that peace and joy might be ours through believing.

The actual, physical resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, after He had taken our place upon the cross in condemnation and under judgment, and after having lain in death and the grave, declares the complete settlement of these questions for the believer's blessing and God's own satisfaction has been gloriously made known, by His exalting the One who died for us to His right hand. We are told in Romans 4:25 and 5:1, that Jesus our Lord was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Then it is also said, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God" (8:34).

The believer can truly say. I have received my condemnation and judgment in the Person of Him who took my place; and now I am righteously cleared of all condemnation; God has justified me, and His word to any questioner is, "Who shall lay anything to charge of God's elect? It is GOD THAT JUSTIFIETH" (8:33). Christ took my place that I might have His place in the favour of God!

"The Lord is risen: we stand beyond the doom

Of all our sin, through Jesus' empty tomb."

FORSAKEN: ACCEPTED

Foreseen long centuries before the actual sufferings of the cross took place, the very words uttered by our Lord Jesus Christ are recorded in Psalm 22:1. They disclose something of the deep depths of abandonment He had to know, when the question of our own guilt and sinfulness was righteously gone into and settled for ever; so in that awful time He cried, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" The answer is given prophetically in the third verse of the Psalm, "Thou art holy." The holiness of God abhorred our condemned condition; but "He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." No words of ours can adequately express His suffering, when He was made sin and forsaken; nor can language fully describe the result in blessing for us.

Our Saviour "bore our sins," but He was "made sin" also. He "died for us," but "in that He died, He died unto sin once" (Rom. 6:10). So perfectly has the matter of our sins and sin been settled that we have justification from all things, and justification of life also; and it is written of the One who died for us and completed the work, "In that He lives; He lives unto God" and it continues concerning us, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus"--in the One who is no longer forsaken, but is alive in the eternal favour of God!

It is true that His death has secured our blessing, but it is also true it has glorified our God and Father. Holiness demanded that He should be forsaken when taking our place; but the perfection of His work, and of the One who did that work to God's entire satisfaction, ensured His resurrection, both on our behalf and for God's own pleasure. Therefore we read that Christ has been raised up from among the dead "by the glory of the Father." What peace and stability it imparts to the heart thus to view our Lord and Saviour; and what glad confidence also to honour Him in our lives and by our lips.

"God is satisfied with Jesus,

We are satisfied as well."

Moreover, long before Psalm 22 predicted the work of the Cross, our God and Father marked us out for blessing through His Son, to the praise of the glory of His grace, "wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. 1:6). Having given Him the present place of nearness which is His with Himself, in holiness and love on high, we are righteously brought into acceptance in that same favour, both as a present and as an eternal thing; for the work of redemption was done by Christ to the settlement of eternal issues. Therefore we read, "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace; where in He has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence."

When God undertook the stupendous task through His Son, of bringing sinners nigh to Himself in Christ, we can but conclude that He would do so in flawless perfection, to His eternal praise. The sinning prodigal left his sinful ways and rags for the joys of his father's home and the best robe: but our Lord Jesus Christ knew the forsaking before we could enjoy the acceptance which is now ours. The believer can say, "The forsaking is past for me, but my acceptance in the favour of God will never be past! My Saviour will never be forsaken again on account of my sins! nor will He ever forfeit the place of nearness He has brought me into! Blessed be His Name."

DEAD: ALIVE

The fact is, our condition as well as our position, was so desperate that it was necessary for us to be quickened as well as forgiven. We had sinned, and needed God's justifying forgiveness truly, but we were also in a state of spiritual death Godward. Nevertheless He had set His heart upon us for blessing, and would not leave us in our wretchedness, but bring us alive from the dead with rejoicing into His holy presence. We are told in Ephesians 2:4, that "God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ--by grace ye are saved," and then in verse 18 we are told, through Christ we now "have access by one Spirit to the Father."

No longer are we left out in distress and darkness, and in the distance of death; but granted the holy, happy privilege of having our place in nearness to the Father. Christ died for us, and now lives, therefore it is through Him this is ours. The Holy Spirit now indwells us, therefore it is by His living power we enter upon it; and the Father finds delight in having us near to Himself. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are each engaged on our behalf, that we might know the living joys of God's presence. In accord with His own holiness, the whole question of sin has been completely settled, and He can now have us righteously near to Himself for His own pleasure.

In the tripartite parable of Luke 15 our Saviour illustrates this in a divinely wonderful way. It is the chapter of divine merrymaking! The straying sheep shows us the wandering sinner; but the lifeless silver illustrates the dead sinner: then the wayward and repentant son pictures both in one--he was lost and found, dead and alive again! After the first and second it is explained that there is joy over one sinner that repenteth;--the joy in heaven begins the moment one repents! In the third however we see fullness of joy reached, when the once repentant sinner, now clothed in the best robe, is in his Father's presence, in a new way calling Him "Father," who says, "Let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found." We are then told, "They began to be merry!" Previously it is said, "He began to be in want!" That beginning ended when he came to his father, but the other knows no ending. The believer on the Son has "passed from death into life." He has eternal life in the Son; and he is given to

know the Father, that his joy may be full.

The epistle of Jude, which tells of most appalling departure from the truth, is addressed to those who are "Beloved in God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ," The gospel of John tells us of the Son of God, whose Word quickens the dead; also of the Father's name made known by Him; then in John's first and second Epistles we are shown that through abiding in Him, we "continue in the Son and in the Father" by the Holy Spirit's power; and thus OUR JOY REMAINS FULL, notwithstanding the downgrade of the so-called "Christian world," and the hectic pursuit of temporary lethal pleasure; carrying them further and further away from that which our risen Lord and Saviour, beyond the world, has entered upon as Psalm 16:11--"PLEASURES FOR EVERMORE"--PLEASURES of an abiding sort--PLEASURES of life eternal, which are ours in Him--the One who is alive to die no more, the Son of the Father's love.

"Now we drink the living waters.

Taste the joys that never fade."

Surely our thankful hearts gladly respond to the sweet singer's stirring strains--"Serve the Lord with gladness!" Our wretched lost estate is left behind for ever, and it is not becoming to serve with sadness! The apostle Paul had plenty of trials, infirmities, persecutions and imprisonments to sadden him; but he possessed in Christ what nothing could rob him of; therefore he wrote, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice!" The apostle John was permitted to see defection in the assemblies, and he suffered banishment; but he wrote of the Son and of the Father, and of the present Comforter, the Spirit of truth come from the Father and the Son, that fullness of joy might be ours, as we have said--"that your joy may be full!" are his oft repeated words.

Leaving alone therefore, all that ministers to the wretchedness which once was ours, may holy, happy liberty in serving the Lord mark us increasingly, as we draw near to that day of "exceeding joy," when we shall be "for ever with the Lord." While we are waiting for Him, may our eyes be wide open watching for Him, our ready hands outstretched working for Him, and our glad hearts so filled with His love and glory that we cannot help worshipping Him!--"SERVE THE LORD WITH GLADNESS!"

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