

# Seedbed of the Epistles

by Mike Attwood

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**Scripture:** Acts 13:23, Romans 3:20, 1 Corinthians 15:3, Isaiah 55:3, Psalms 16:10, Romans 8:33, Ephesians 2:8, Revelation 20:11

**Topics:** "Salvation through Christ", "Justification by Faith"

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## Description

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## Transcript

Okay. All right. I'd like you to turn with me, please, in your Bibles to the book of Acts in chapter 13.

And even though it's not really a Christmas message, I suppose it could easily morph into one because Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. And certainly this sermon of Paul in Acts 13 has that essential message. But before we read the portion, I just want to give a little bit of a, just a couple of minutes report on just the last three weeks down in the Bahamas.

I'm not going to say a whole lot, but I just thought you would be interested in the history of how the assemblies in the Bahamas began. And it began in actually New York City, where John Nelson Darby was visiting the city, having meetings, and he went for a walk in Central Park. And in Central Park, he met a man and he was on a park bench and he was able to point that man to the Savior.

The man was saved, came into fellowship in the assemblies. His name was Charles Holder. In 1875, Charles Holder felt exercised to go to the Bahamas.

And he began to preach on the different islands, preaching the gospel at different points around the islands. And one of them was Spanish Wells, where I was. And a number of people were saved.

They began meeting in the home. They called them the Holderites because they were following Mr. Holder at that time. But I just think of how many thousands of souls will be in eternity because James Darby shared the gospel with this man.

And this man obeyed the call of God to go to the Bahamas. And the assembly in Spanish Wells, they've had three awakenings in their history where God was working in marvelous ways. People falling on the street under conviction of sin, crying out, what must I do to be saved? And Sunday night gospel service, which is their probably most attended meeting.

I would say there were six ships out at sea because they're all fishermen and there was still 150 there each Sunday night for the gospel service. And so a great work has been done. And one of my friends down there converted, drug addict, saved in one of those awakenings going on for the Lord.

Just delightful to see what God has done and is doing. So praise the Lord for obedience of one individual to share Christ with someone. You just never know the person that you point to the Savior, what ramifications there would be.

I think of the man that led D.L. Moody to Christ. No idea that millions would be saved as a result of that one obedience and sharing the gospel. Anyway, Acts 13.

I want to begin reading in verse 23 and I want to go down to verse 39. I mentioned last time we were looking at this passage that this is the first recorded sermon of Paul the Apostle. Not that he didn't preach before, but this is the first one we have the details of.

And it's the longest sermon in the book of Acts. So that's why we're going to break it up. So we're going to break this up.

We've already broken it up into one section. We're going to do a second one today. And then the next time we'll look at the response to the message.

So beginning verse 23, it says this. Of this man's seed, speaking of David in the previous verse, of this man's seed hath God, according to his promise, raised unto Israel a Savior, Jesus. When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel, and as John fulfilled his cause, he said, whom think ye that I am? I am not he, but behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of his feet I am not worthy to loose.

Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent. For they that dwell at Jerusalem and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him. And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain.

And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a sepulchre. But God raised him from the dead. And he was seen many days of then which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people.

And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us, their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again, as it is also written in the second Psalm, thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee. And as concerning that he raised him up

from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Wherefore, he saith also in another Psalm, thou shalt not suffer thine holy one to see corruption.

For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God fell on sleep and was laid unto his fathers and saw corruption. But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption. Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.

And by him, all that believe are justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. And God will again bless that reading of this precious word. Now, if you remember the background from last time, this was in the synagogue in Antioch in Pisidia, where this sermon was preached.

And they were visitors there that morning, Paul and Barnabas. And so they asked them, do you have a word for us? And Paul got up and he began to preach. And it was not your typical synagogue sermon.

Your typical synagogue sermon, as we said last time, was you've not been keeping the law like you should. You've got to try harder. You've got to do better.

You've got to, you know, you've got to really try hard to do well this week, because you failed last week. And so it was a kind of a kind of motivational exaltation to do better at keeping the law. And we're going to see that the message that Paul delivered was altogether different.

And what we're going to say, too, is that I want to just one thing I really noticed in studying it this time was I believe in this sermon, you have the seed thoughts of a lot of Paul's epistles. Great theme of justification going to be taken up in Romans and Galatians. You've got the gospel, which he preached in First Corinthians.

All of it's found in seed form here. And of course, the superiority of Christ to any previous deliverer, that's Hebrews, isn't it? So I think that what we see here is kind of in embryo form, the development of Paul's understanding is going to be fully brought forth in the epistles of the Apostle Paul. And so we notice he says in verse 23 of this man's seed, speaking of David from the previous verse, and of all the deliverers that God had raised up because of their failure to keep the law, they had been chastened so many times, and they cried out, God raised up a deliverer for them.

And so because of their failure, and then one of these deliverers was David, the mighty king. And then we're told in verse 23 of this man's seed, have God, according to his promise, raised unto Israel, a savior, Jesus, the ultimate deliverer, the Lord Jesus. And so we find that after David, all the prophetic scriptures would point to the fact that when Messiah came, when this deliverer that God was sending would come, he would come as a direct descendant of David.

He would be of his lineage. And so this is the fulfillment of that. He says, he said of this man's seed, have God, according to his promise, raised up unto Israel, a savior, Jesus.

And that's why, by the way, the genealogical accounts that we read in the gospel of Luke and the gospel of Matthew are so important, because it's saying that he is that descendant of David, right? That only he could be that descendant. Nobody else fits the criteria. He is that promised descendant of David.

There's nobody else that fits. So Paul is really ready now to get to the heart of his message, describing to us this savior, Jesus. And so he begins with his forerunner.

And of course, that's a good place to begin. That's where it begins in the gospel accounts. And of course, they would be aware of this.

This was not done in a corner. The ministry of John the Baptist, the ministry of the Lord Jesus, these men, even though they're in Antioch, Pasadena, because the males would have all gone up to Jerusalem at the feasts, they would know about John the Baptist, they would know about the Lord Jesus. And so he says, when John had first preached before his coming, the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

So he talks about John's ministry, preparing the way, the one who was sent, as it were, to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah. And we're reminded again and again of John's ministry in the Old Testament. It was prophesied, wasn't it? Behold, I send my messenger, Malachi chapter three, and verse one, to prepare the way.

Isaiah chapter 40 is going to make straight the paths, right? So there's a lot of Old Testament references to the coming of John the Baptist. And so he preached a message of repentance, get ready, your Messiah is coming, be in a proper condition to receive him. And so he taught the baptism of repentance to the people of Israel.

And verse 25, as John fulfilled his cause, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not he, but behold, there comes one after me, whose shoes of his feet I am not worthy to loose. And so he tells us about the fact that he's not the Messiah, John, he's just the one preparing the way. And then he says this, I'm not even fit to tie his shoelaces.

Don't even put me on the same category, or if we're talking about books, don't put me on the same shelf. He's altogether different. And I think it's really important.

And I love John, just go with me just for a second. I was reading this scripture last week, and it really blessed me to read it in John chapter 10, and verse 41, about the marvelous ministry of John the Baptist. And it's a lovely summary of his ministry.

In verse 41 of John 10, it says, Many resorted unto him and said, this is the people's comments about John, John did no miracle. So what we'd say is there was nothing spectacular about the ministry of John, no miracle at all. Just a straightforward ministry, no spectacle there.

But then it says this, but all things that John spake of this man were true. Isn't that wonderful? It wasn't a spectacular ministry, but it was a solid ministry. Everything he said about the Lord Jesus was true.

Wouldn't that be wonderful? At the end of your life, if it was said to you by the Lord, you didn't do any miracles, but everything you said about my son was absolutely true. To me, that's a wonderful ministry, right? That would speak consistently, truthfully, and well about the person of the Lord Jesus. And then he says, verse 42, and many believed on him there.

And so as a result of John's faithful testimony to the person of Christ, many believed on the Lord Jesus in that location where John had done his baptizing. And so again, what a wonderful ministry that John had. And the Lord spoke so highly of John in Matthew's gospel chapter 11 and verse 11.

We read this little comment the Lord Jesus makes about John, and it's quite a remarkable statement. It says, Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women, there hath not risen the greater than John the Baptist, notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And so up to

that point, he says, there's nobody greater than John.

That's quite, I mean, like we're talking about David and Moses and Solomon. I mean, there's a lot of big names have gone before. And he said, the Lord Jesus in his opinion, and of course I take his opinion seriously because he's God.

He says there's nobody better than John. And yet John says, the greatest man born of women, he says, I'm not even worthy to untie his shoes or tie his shoes. Isn't that amazing? Talk about a ministry that exalts the person of the Lord Jesus.

And that's what John did. He must increase and I must decrease. And if we would learn anything from this, brethren, when we get up there, don't talk about self, talk about Christ.

Make much of him, magnify the person of the Lord Jesus. That's the ministry that men need. They don't need to hear about us.

They need to hear about him. So again, back in our passage, verse 26, he says, men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham and whosoever among you feareth God, remember that these synagogues, not only were they Jews, but they were what they called the God-fearers, disillusioned with paganism. They're sick of paganism and all its immorality.

And they're coming to the synagogue and they're there to seek after the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. So he's addressing this group and he says, among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent. He said, this message of salvation is being delivered to you this morning.

I mean, what a morning for them. They're hearing this message of salvation. And I hope it thrills us.

But again, down on Spanish Wells, they love the gospel. They just, I mean, you can just see their faces glowing when you preach the gospel. Even though many of them are saved people, they just love the gospel.

And of course, do we recognize what a day it was when this message of salvation was sent to us and we heard it and by faith believed it? What a day that was. That is going to be the eternally defining moment of our experience. The day that that message of salvation came to us, especially if we responded to it in the right way.

And so he says, the word of this salvation is sent to you. And yet you might ask the question, he's recommending them a savior who had been rejected and executed at the request of the Jews at Jerusalem. What kind of credentials were these for a Messiah who had been crucified? And that's what they would have been aware of.

They knew the things that had taken place in Jerusalem. Perhaps many of them would have been at the very Passover where Christ was crucified. And so in verse 27, it says, explaining how is it that they did these things? He says, for they that dwell at Jerusalem and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him.

Isn't it interesting that these people were ultra religious? I mean, really religious Jews, and yet they didn't know him, their own Messiah, nor did they know the scriptures. That's what he says. They're ignorant.

It's not that they didn't know the Bible, because they did. They quoted it all the time. So what does it mean they didn't know the scriptures? The bottom line was, you see, there's a key that unlocks the door of the scriptures, and they rejected the key.

And without that key, you can't understand it. The Lord said to them, he directly said to them, you search the scriptures, they really were diligent search, you search the scriptures for in them, you think you have eternal life, but he says, these are they which testify of me. You see, you could be a university professor who knows Hebrew and Greek and Aramaic and all those languages.

And you know a lot about the Bible. But listen, if a person knows all that stuff, but they don't know Christ, they're never going to understand the message of Scripture. Because the key is right there at the door is the person of Christ.

Without that key, you'll never fully grasp the truth of the Word of God. And so the scriptures were full of references to Messiah and his coming, even down to incredible details, that he'd be born in Bethlehem of Judea, that he would be sold for 30 pieces of silver, that the blood money would be used to buy a part of his field, that he would be led as a sheep to the slaughter, that his hands and feet would be pierced, that he would be mocked and given vinegar to drink. I mean, the whole story, you don't need the Gospels to get the story.

It's all there in the Old Testament. They had it, but they were ignorant. And it just shows, isn't it possible today to be part of North American Christendom, right? To go to a church of some kind, and still to be ignorant of the Savior and the Scriptures.

And we see it all the time. But the amazing thing is that in condemning him, they actually fulfilled the very Scriptures of the Old Testament. And again, don't we see the sovereignty of God here in using these people in their unbelief and blindness of heart, and yet they're very people that are in that condition, actually fulfilling the Word of God.

And he says to them, yet the voice of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath day, they have fulfilled that in condemning. They're actually fulfilling the very Word of God in doing it. And so it says in verse 28, and though they found no cause of death in him, no cause of death, nobody found any cause of death.

The judicial system, I can find no fault in him, right? I mean, the verdict was in, he's not guilty. And everybody was of the same opinion that he was perfectly innocent of all charges, no cause of death in him. And by the way, even bigger than that, no cause of death in him, because the wages of sin is death.

And he was spotless, the spotless Lamb of God. There was absolutely no cause of death in him. And yet it says, despite that, the fact there's no cause of death, yet they desired, they Pilate, that they, that he should be slain.

And they put tremendous pressure on Pilate. You're not a friend of Caesar. You know, this is kind of get him into serious trouble.

They put a lot of pressure on Pilate to have him crucified. And so it says that they desired Pilate that he should be slain. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, there on the cross, all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a sepulcher.

Let me just say this, that the Romans in laying him, okay, in other words, the Romans, these are an execution squad. They know what a dead man looks like. And they know when somebody's dead.

I mean, that's, that's what they do. That's their profession. They understand reality of death.

And so that's why when he was put in that grave, he hadn't swooned on the cross, as the Muslims would tell you, he was really dead. And they put him in that, that sepulcher. But notice it says, but, don't you love that word? But God, love those two words, but God raised him from the dead.

I want to just pause there. I want you to go with me to 1 Corinthians 15. Remember I said, this is the seed plot of the teaching of the apostle Paul in his epistles.

And here we got it in 1 Corinthians 15, very clearly. And keep your finger there, because we're going to go back to Acts. And then we're going to come back to 1 Corinthians 15, verses one through four.

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel, which I preached unto you, which also you have received, and wherein you stand, by which also you are saved, if you keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless you have believed in vain. Notice this, for I deliver it unto you. Now notice this phrase, first of all, I deliver it unto you, first of all, and we can put it this way, I deliver it to you of first importance.

Right? I think, brethren, the most important message we can ever preach, of first importance, is the gospel message. Everything else flows out of that, right? Without that, everything else is redundant. Of first importance, he says, that which also I received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures, and that he was buried, there he is laid in the sepulcher, and that he rose again the third day, according to the scriptures.

Everything that he's just preached, in the synagogue in Antioch, he reasserts it to the Corinthian assemblies, this is the message that he preached. Christ died, Christ was buried, Christ rose again, according to the scriptures. And then notice, it says, verse 31, and he was seen, this is Acts 13 31, many days of them which came up with him, from Galilee to Jerusalem, you are his witnesses unto the people.

And again, if you go back to 1 Corinthians 15, we read in verse 5 through 8, and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve, and after that he was seen of both five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. And after that, he was seen of James, then of all the apostles, and last of all, he was seen of me also, as one born out of two times. And so again, what's his message here in Acts 13? He died, he was buried, he rose again, and he was seen.

What's his message in 1 Corinthians? Exactly the same, isn't it? This is the seatbed of his teaching in the epistles, this first message that he gives, that's recorded for us, is the seatbed of it all, and so he was seen. Of course, eyewitness evidence is so critical, isn't it? I've mentioned this before, but I'll never forget it. I was going through a green light in Greenville, North Carolina, and I saw a guy coming at me, I couldn't, you know, there's a guy beside of me, I couldn't escape, and he was coming through the red light, and he plowed right into me.

Nothing I could do about it, I just watched it happen. But on the corner of the intersection, there was a police squad car. I have never been happier in my life to see a police squad car.

It was wonderful. Normally when I see those things, I get nervous. This time I was rejoicing in my heart because it was seen, and pretty critical eyewitness evidence was seen that day.

Praise God for that, right? So here we have it. He was seen, eyewitness evidence, amazing evidence there that he indeed rose from the dead. And so it says, verse 32, and we declare unto you glad tidings.

Verse 32, glad tidings, the gospel, that's the word, glad tidings, the good news, and it is good news for mankind, for planet Earth, that Jesus came and died and was buried and rose again victorious over death. This is glad tidings. How did the promise which was made unto the fathers, all this promise going back even to Genesis 3, some of us talked about that this morning, going back to Genesis 3, all the way the promise of this deliverer has finally been fulfilled in the person of the Lord Jesus.

And what is the effect of this glad tidings? It's twofold. First of all, that the very events that we've been looking at prove that he is the Messiah by fulfilling the Old Testament scriptures. And so in a sense, it's good news because it shows God is faithful to fulfill what has been written.

It's the promise has been fulfilled. He is the Messiah. He fulfilled those Old Testament scriptures.

Secondly, as a result of his death, burial, and resurrection, they provide salvation for all that will believe. So verse 33, it said, God hath fulfilled the same unto us, their children, in that he raised up Jesus again, as it also written in the second Psalm, thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee. He's going to now present some evidence from the Old Testament to the resurrection of the Messiah.

And it's quoting from Psalm 2, a Messianic Psalm. And that Messianic Psalm, it speaks about the opposition to God's anointed king, and yet God's ultimate purpose that that king, though opposed by men and kings and the rulers of this world, will one day be enthroned in Mount Zion as king. Yet have I set my king on my holy hill of Zion.

It's a marvelous, marvelous Psalm, one of my favorite Psalms, Psalm 2. And so he quotes from Psalm 2, and he says, God has fulfilled the same to their children in that he had raised up Jesus again, as it is also written in the second Psalm, thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee. What does that mean, this day have I begotten thee? See, one of the reasons he was crucified was that he kept making this claim that he was the son of God. And they didn't like that.

And they understood what he was saying. They said, he claims to be the son of God, and he made that claim, and he made it often. I am the son of God, the eternal son, whoever lived in the bosom of the Father, that's who I am.

And they thought he was an apostate. They thought he was false in every claim he made. And so they crucified him as a blasphemer for making that claim.

And yet God reversed it all by raising him from the dead and saying, that's true. He is who he claimed to be. And so this idea of being begotten again, it's the idea of this, that it's showing, it's proving without doubt that he is the eternally begotten one of the Father.

The Lord Jesus is God's only begotten son. And the resurrection affirmed everything Jesus had already said. He didn't become the son in incarnation.

He was eternally the son. But the resurrection affirmed the reality of the fact that this claims to be true. And that is so critical for us to understand.

And so it says, verse 34, and as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption. He said in this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Now, what's all that about these sure mercies of David? What does that really mean? Well, it's actually a quotation from Isaiah 55, and verse three, I guess it would be good to just go there and see that Paul quotes from Isaiah.

And it's very interesting that as you go through Paul's epistles, you will find that probably his favorite prophet to quote from is Isaiah, constantly quoting from Isaiah's prophecy through his epistles. But Isaiah 55, verse three, incline your ear, come unto me here, and your soul shall live. And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.

So again, it's quoting directly from Isaiah 53, 55. But what does that, again, what does it really mean? I'll give you the sure mercies of David. Well, let's go back to the Old Testament and see what this is really all talking about.

1 Kings chapter, no, I'm sorry, 2 Samuel, 2 Samuel 7, 2 Samuel chapter 7, and verse 16. God made a promise to David, quite a remarkable promise. It says, verse 16 of 2 Samuel 7, and thine house in thy kingdom shall be established forever before thee, thy throne shall be established forever.

So David's house, that's a descendant of David, David's kingdom will be established forever, and his throne, the throne of David, shall be established forever. Now let's go to one of the scriptures that kind of throws some light on this, Psalm 132, Psalm 132, and verse 11. The Lord has sworn in truth unto David.

He will not turn from it, who has got us sworn an oath on this to David, and he's not going to go back on it, of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne. So the descendant of David is going to sit on David's throne, and it's going to be forever. Now how can that be? Well, in the resurrection of Christ, the descendant of David is going to sit on David's throne, and he's going to sit there and reign forever.

Amen. And so the sure mercy of David are being brought clearly to us, and the resurrection accomplishes that. He lives now in the power of an endless life, so he can sit on that throne, and he can reign over Israel forever and ever and ever.

And so back again to our passage, verse 35, he says, wherefore he saith also in another psalm, thou shalt not suffer thine holy one to see corruption. And this is from Psalm 16, another messianic psalm, and verse 10, again proving the resurrection is seen in the Old Testament. Psalm 16, verse 10, now we're told in the very next verse, you'll not suffer your holy one to see corruption, that clearly it couldn't be a David that was being spoken about, because it says in verse 36, for David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep and was laid unto his father's, and saw corruption.

In other words, if you could dig up the tomb of David, you wouldn't find much left of David in that tomb. Corruption set in, and it's quite evident. So it can't clearly be referring to David.

So who is it referring to? Well, it's referring to David's greatest son, the Messiah, the Lord Jesus. That's who he's referring to. He did not see corruption.

Now again, let me just think about this. Christ didn't see corruption, because it says verse 37, but he whom God raised again, speaking of the Lord Jesus, saw no corruption. Now let me just say this.

It wasn't embalment that kept the body of Jesus free from the process of decomposition. It wasn't the fact the body was embalmed. Lazarus had been embalmed, but when the Lord went to open his tomb,

Martha is horrified.

She says, don't you realize by this time he stinks. He's been dead four days. The process of corruption has already begun, but for the Lord Jesus.

And again, it's true of all the human race with the perception of the Lord Jesus, because doesn't Paul say in 1 Corinthians 15 verse 42 about the body that it's sown in corruption and raised again, but sown in corruption. So for the whole of humanity, that corruption process begins when we die. And yet for the Lord Jesus, he saw no corruption.

Now why? Again, could it be that the reason the body corrupts is because of sin? And the Lord Jesus was entirely without sin. And so there's no corruption in him. By the way, just an aside, don't want to miss this.

David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, life goes by so quick, doesn't it? Only one life will soon be passed. Only what's done for Christ will last. Are we serving our generation? And again, notice by the will of God, not based on what I think or what my ideas are, by the will of God, are we serving our generation by the will of God? Verse 37, it says, he whom God raised again saw no corruption.

His body not only escaped the decay, but also could not be subject to death even itself. He conquered death. He rose again.

He whom God raised again saw no corruption, be it known unto you, therefore. This is where it gets down to the application. The message of the gospel has never changed.

Christ died. He was buried. He rose again the third day.

He fulfilled all the promises in the Old Testament. And he has come as the ultimate deliverer to save people from their sin. And so he says, be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this now is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.

Now, what a different message than saying, you know, you really blew it last week, but really try harder this time. Okay? Do your best. You know, come on.

You're really not. No, this is a different message. This man has preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.

Yes, you have failed. And you will continue to fail. And you will fail to your dying breath, right? Because we're sinners and rebels by nature and by choice.

But what a wonderful thing to be able to preach to people. Your sins can be forgiven in the sight of God, completely forgiven. This is a much more hopeful, encouraging message, the message of the forgiveness of sins.

And by him, all that believe are justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. Isn't this Paul's essential teaching in the Epistles? That it's impossible to be justified by law. Law condemns us.

Law shows us we're sick. Law reveals our sin. Law is the diagnosis mechanism to show us our lost condition.

Gospel is what saves. Christ's work on Calvary. That's what declares a man righteous.

And so his message of justification, boy, does he love that message of justification? Do you love the message of justification? Being declared, isn't it wonderful to be declared righteous in the sight of God? Despite who we are, declared a legal declaration. Let me just tell you four important things about justification before we wrap up this morning. Both in Hebrew and Greek, justify does not mean to make someone righteous.

It doesn't mean to make someone righteous, but to declare someone righteous. Because there's times when I still don't act righteously. I'm justified, but it didn't make me righteous.

It declared me righteous. It's a legal declaration, a legal standing in the highest court in the universe, the court of heaven, declared righteous. It's always God that does the justifying.

Romans 8, 33, it's God that justifies. He's the one who makes the declaration. I find this guilty sinner to be declared righteous.

Boy, that's a message, isn't it? I find this guilty sinner to be declared righteous. God does it the moment the person puts their faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus. That's when that declaration occurs.

He declares them righteous in God's court. No more charges can be brought against that person because the court decision is already in, declared righteous. Isn't that wonderful? I mean, think about it.

I mean, even since you've been saved, are there things that you've done that you wouldn't want brought up before the high court of heaven? Well, it won't. Your sins and your iniquities, God says, I will remember them no more. The court decision is in.

You are declared righteous. Justification is an instantaneous act which is never repeated and cannot be withdrawn. They're justified, notice it says, from all things.

By him all the believer justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. Justified from all things, past, present, future. And then finally, this justification is based solely upon the work of Christ.

His death and burial and resurrection. That is the basis. That's the reason God can justify us and still retain his righteousness and holiness.

He couldn't just justify us if a payment had not been made, if a penalty had not been. See, we are sinners and we are guilty and that had to be dealt with somehow. And it was dealt with in those three hours of darkness when all our sins were laid upon him.

And God, in his righteous anger, poured out his wrath on his son in our place and in our story. All my sins were laid upon him. Jesus bore them on the tree.

God who knew them laid them on him and believing thou art free. The debt of sin has been fully discharged, made possible now for God to declare his righteousness because we believed in his son. Despite the length of Paul's sermon and the amount of material he covers, the overall message is very simple.

You cannot save yourself by self-improvement in self-effort. You'll never be declared righteous by a zealous attempt to keep the law of Moses. What we've always needed, what Israel have always needed is a deliverer, a savior who can save them from the penalty of sin and provide for them a right standing

before the holy God.

And how we need to rejoice in this message. Yeah, it's Christmas. But why Christmas? Because Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

Paul says, of whom I'm chief. We might dispute that, we might argue with that, but scripture says so you're not going to win the argument. The chief of sinners got saved, which means whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord can be saved.

And it's wonderful to be saved. How? By grace through faith in the finished work of Christ. Not by works of righteousness which we have done according to his mercy.

I don't know about you, but I'm really happy that I'm a justified man and that I don't have to fear the great white throne judgment because the verdict is already in. I settled out of court. And isn't it wonderful to settle out of court.

Father, we're so grateful for the Lord Jesus. We're so grateful for the old, old gospel. Lord, help us never to tire of this message about Christ Jesus coming into the world to save sinners, about justification by faith in the finished work of Christ, about his death and his burial and his resurrection from the dead.

Oh, Father, we're thankful that even in a coming day, the Lord Jesus will sit on the throne of his father, David, and will reign over a renewed earth for a thousand years in righteousness. Oh, what a day that will be. But until then, in the day of his rejection, we have the privilege of serving him and making this message known.

Help us, Lord. Give us boldness. Give us conviction to share this message for the lost and dying world.

Oh, give me the glory in Jesus name. Amen.

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