

Great Words of the Gospel - Part 5

by Roy Hession

God justifies the ungodly by declaring them right with himself, apart from any question of works, on the basis of the cross of our Lord Jesus.

Duration: 1:01:06

Topics: "Gospel"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of confessing one's wrongdoings and relying on the blood of Jesus for forgiveness. They discuss how being justified by God is not about proving oneself right, but rather acknowledging one's mistakes and seeking redemption through the cross. The speaker shares their personal experience as a preacher who has faced criticism and asks God to vindicate them. They highlight the significance of God's justification and how it is based on His righteousness, not our own. The sermon references Isaiah 54:17, which states that no weapon formed against God's servants shall prosper and that their vindication comes from Him.

Transcript

Will you turn to the epistle to the Romans, chapter 3, verse 19. Verse 21, we'll begin at verse 21. But now, I'm reading in the authorised version with occasional emendations, but now the righteousness of God, apart from the law, is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets.

Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith in Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. There is no difference in grace, because there is no difference in sin. For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely or gratuitously by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the passing over of sins done aforetime, passing them over in his forbearance.

To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay, but by the law of faith.

Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. Chapter four, verse one, what shall we say then that Abraham our father as pertaining to the flesh hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory, he has a right to boast, but not before God. For what

saith the scripture, Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

His faith in God was counted for a righteousness which he didn't otherwise possess. Now to him that worketh and struggles and does a lot of other things, is the reward if he ever gets it, reckoned not of grace, but of debt, it's owing to him he's done so well. But for the poor fellow who can't do so well, to him that worketh not, but simply believes on him that justifies the ungodly, his faith in a God like that is counted for righteousness, is counted for a righteousness which he doesn't otherwise possess.

Even as David also describeth the righteousness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness apart from works, saying, blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sins are covered, blessed is the Lord, blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not sin. And then one verse more in chapter eight, verse thirty-three, who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies, woe betide any being, man or demon, who challenges God's edict about his dear redeemed elect one. Our theme this morning is God justifying the ungodly, that is justification.

To have announced straight away that my theme was justification would have given you a sort of technical impression. I think the word justification, just like that, has a theological, technical connotation. And so I prefer to get to the heart of this glorious liberating truth and say our theme is God justifying the ungodly.

Beautiful. When that man confesses that he is ungodly, then God delights to justify such a man. Now I want in this theme to end by making a very practical application of this great and glorious word of the gospel to us.

But quite obviously before one makes the application, one must lay the foundation and we must understand what this great word and blessing of the gospel is. But I want to point at the very beginning forward to the application a little hint of it at the first so that you will know what we're really aiming for at the end as we lay the foundation. And the application I want to make of this great blessing of the gospel, God justifying the ungodly, is the very application that Paul makes of it in Romans 8.33. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect, it is God that justifies.

Some time ago I read in an article just one little sentence which I underlined. And it was this, the man who is justified by faith need not worry what other people think of him or say of him. The man who knows himself justified by faith need not worry what other people think of him because who shall lay anything to the charge of that man if God has justified him.

But the trouble is we do worry, we're very sensitive to what other people think. And Christian leaders perhaps more than others, many a Christian, a pastor, a vicar and his wife have had sleepless nights about what people are saying about them, what people say, think of them. And they do worry.

But if God has justified that man, he's the highest authority in the land. And it doesn't matter what others may say, what my critics may say. Of course there's more to it as we shall see than just this, but this is the end to which we're coming.

A hymn that we might, oh yes we did indeed sing, the hymn we've just sung said, Bold shall I stand in that great day, for who ought to my charge shall lay. But this boldness is not merely for that great day, it's for me and for you right now. And that among my fellows.

I can walk among my fellows. I can walk among my critics absolutely bold, because it's God that justifies. As I say there's a little more to it than that, otherwise you might run away with a wrong impression.

But that's the end to which we want to get. And now let's understand what this is when God justifying the sinner, justification. First, the word justification is almost identical in the Greek with the word elsewhere translated righteousness.

Justification and righteousness invariably in the Greek are almost identical. Therefore when God justifies a man, you can really say he righteous-ifies a man. To be justified is to be righteous-ified.

Now this righteousness, which in another place it's imputed, that's the same thing. He imputes righteousness to a man, that's justification. He righteous-ifies a man.

Now this righteousness, which is counted to the believer, is not personal righteousness in the sense of his wonderful, beautiful character. Years ago, Canon Guy King was writing the Scripture Union notes on Romans and I found them tremendously helpful. And he said at the outset, whenever you come across this word righteousness in much of this epistle, you can call it rightness with God.

And therefore when we read God counts righteousness to a believer, he counts rightness with God to that believer. On ordinary count, he doesn't appear to have such a rightness with God, but God says I'm going to do it. I'm going to count rightness with God.

And I would suggest when you're reading these parts of Paul's letters and you have come across this word righteousness, that you equate it with rightness with God, an absolute, perfect, unassailable, untarnished, right relationship with God. And thus it is when God justifies a man, he counts that man and declares that man, whoever he is, utterly and completely right and acceptable to himself. And if God justifies a man, who shall lay anything to his charge? And if he attempts to do so, if he really knows himself declared right with God, he needn't worry.

He needn't be disturbed. The highest authority in the universe has declared him right with himself. That's the first thing.

Now the second thing I want to say is that God does this extraordinary, beautiful thing of declaring a man right with himself when that man actually is a sinner, when that man is ungodly. It talks about God justifying who? God declaring those to be right with him. Who does he declare thus to be right with him? If you please, the ungodly.

Now this hardly seems to be moral. Surely those are declared to be right with God who on practical showing would seem to be right. Those who are ostensibly wrong must be declared wrong.

And this is how God gave instructions to the Old Testament judges. He said you shall condemn the wicked and you shall justify the righteous. But in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, here is God doing the very opposite of what he told his judges to do.

This extraordinary thing, God declaring right with himself those who on any other count are wrong. Well it's a bit of a thing to take when you really see it that way, but all I can say it gives sinners and failed saints a hope. Because really and truly you often find yourself in the category of the ungodly.

The ungodly aren't those necessarily who are cursing and swearing, they are those who haven't brought God into the situation and have acted in the flesh. And who of us hasn't done that? And when you've done that you say well I'm a pretty poor type, there's no hope for me, how can I enjoy fellowship with God? Until you hear that such people, if they're prepared to be honest about their spiritual state, become candidates for this marvellous grace of God and they know afresh the blessedness of God declaring those right with himself who know themselves to have shown themselves ungodly. And so the first thing we've said is what, that it is God declaring us right with himself, that this if you please is done for the ungodly, but thirdly, he is not unjust in doing so.

He's not violating his own principles of justice in doing so, although for an earthly judge to do it, it would be. But God who is really the source of all justice, extraordinary, doesn't violate his justice in thus doing this beautiful thing for sinners because he does it on the basis of the cross of our Lord Jesus. We read this morning in Romans 3, whom God set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, that cross, that Jesus on the cross was a propitiation, the fire of the anger of the just wrath of God was spending itself in him and thus because it's spent, justice has been honoured, it hasn't been set aside, it's been honoured in the most awesome way and God now is free to be just and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.

Now we're normally used to the conception of writing across that wondrous scene where the Prince of Glory died to declare his love, but in Romans 3 he says you've got to write something else across that cross to declare his righteousness. Righteousness demanded it, God gave it and it was really due for God had passed over the sins of Old Testament saints. How's that done? Is that just of God to declare Abraham and others to be right with himself? Is God not violating his own principles of justice? And so there was waiting this great deed done on Calvary to declare God's righteousness retrospectively for the passing over of sins done at wartime, passing over them as he did in his forbearance.

How he was just in doing so was only revealed when the Lamb died the just for us the unjust. One arm of the cross goes back to the dawn of history and the other arm of the cross goes on to the end of history. So God is seen to be just in doing what he did for sinners in the Old Testament era and now he's seen to be just in justifying the ungodly who believes in Jesus.

Because the sinless Savior died, my guilty soul is counted free and God the just is satisfied to look on him and pardon me. There's a hint of this in Isaiah 45 where Jehovah says, there is none beside me a just God and a Savior. Now this is good for us because you know you've got to know you're not only lovingly saved but justly saved.

My God to know that thou art just gives rest and peace within. I could not in a mercy trust which takes no count of sin but the mercy that comes to you is sprinkled with atoning blood and God has taken account of sin and really this should satisfy the most troubled conscience. I hear the words of love, I gaze upon the blood, I see the mighty sacrifice and I have peace with God.

Yes, God does his great deed for us sinners on the basis of the cross and all of it is done completely apart from works. John chapter 3 of Romans 3.28, therefore we conclude that a man is justified, declared right with God apart from the works of the law. That's how the word is.

I don't know how it is in the other version, the authorised has without the works of the law. That my margin gets it accurately apart from any question of works. Oh we've got some good works, sure we have, so glad you have.

No one wants you to go around behaving in a disruptive way but then we've also done some bad works which you might think would disqualify you but not under grace. Under grace all the moral distinctions are levelled. Your good doesn't help you one iota, the fact you've been a good mother, you brought up a lovely family, you've done your duty, you enjoy your church, you do all those good good things, you're liked and loved in the community, when it comes to your relationship with God isn't going to help you one iota.

You've got to take the whole lot as a bundle of filthy rags which God says it is in his sight. I'm sorry, and lay it at the foot of the cross. It's apart from any good you've done, but oh thank God it's also apart from any evil you've done.

Your good isn't going to help you, sorry about that, but oh praise the Lord, your bad isn't going to hinder you, not for one iota, or the sins of a lifetime when a man comes to the cross, it says they shall not be mentioned unto him. All together of undeserved grace, all together apart from the question of works. We go on to say further, that though this great glorious being counted utterly right with God, where as it is completely apart from works, is not apart from repentance and faith.

Now in Paul's letter, he doesn't say being justified by repentance and faith, as I've just said, he says being justified by faith, as opposed to works. But, repentance is all the time implied and presupposed. Take for instance this lovely verse about those that believe on him who justifies the ungodly.

How can you believe on him who justifies the ungodly unless you see yourself to be ungodly, and to have acted in an ungodly way? And seeing yourself and confessing that fact is repentance. So this great blessing is not apart from repentance and faith. And repentance is very important for the Christian.

Now someone has said that the Christian life, ideally, should begin with repentance and go on in faith. But in practice, it starts in faith, and if it goes on at all afterwards, has to go on in repentance. It certainly was that way with me.

Here in Southwold, many years ago, I was reconciled to God, and I let Jesus come into my heart and I laid down the arms of my rebellion, and he came in. And it was just faith. Now brother, don't trust your feelings, count the promise, he's dwelling in you.

And I did, I knew he was, and I entered in by faith. But you know, though I tried to go on in faith for a bit, I found ultimately, even after I was evangelist, I got stuck, and I found there were things that I wasn't calling sin, and I found I had to go on in repentance. And therefore, repentance and faith, yes, together, always the two.

But you know, for the Christian, he can think it's all by faith, all by faith, all by faith, and he's getting away with a whole heap of things that are grieving the Holy Spirit, and so it's repentance and faith. Now just let me, of course, make a distinction. There is an overall justification of the sinner unto life, unto eternal life.

Which doesn't change with the walk and the current condition of that sinner. He isn't in and out of a right relationship with God in an overall sense. But that justification of himself before God has got to be lived in, and enjoyed, it's not a doctrine merely for the textbook, it's a contemporary, up-to-the-minute experience.

But whereas you are justified by faith in an overall sense, you're not, you do not enjoy that when you're not repenting. When things come in, you won't call them sin. So I want to make that clear, and we're thinking, well, we're thinking for some there needs to be this overall justification, maybe you're not really clear there, but some of us are.

But you're not in the happy enjoyment of it because there are things that need repentance and need taking to Jesus. All right then, going back to this particular heading, not apart from repentance and faith. And repentance is that which says I'm wrong, change my mind, oh God, you're right and I'm wrong.

And you know, the moment you're broken enough in spirit to say, oh God, I've been so wrong, God says you're right. And you have the sense you're right. When you say you're right, it's the other fellow who's wrong, God says you're wrong.

I'm not wrong. What about that attitude? That's wrong, isn't it? But when you break and say, I'm wrong, the Lord says, wait a long time for that. Now, I want to tell you, because the sinless Saviour died, I declare you as right with myself as the blood of my Son can make you.

Think of the story of the publican who beat upon his breast in the temple and said, God be merciful, God be propitiated to me, the sinner. And Jesus said, I tell you, that man went down to his house justified rather than the other, declared right. That's strange.

He'd just been saying, oh God, I'm wrong. And now says, God says, you're right. Lord, I don't think you understood me properly.

I've been so wrong. I've been wrong in the home, I've been blaming the wife, I've been blaming the kids, I'm in a mess. Oh God, I'm all wrong.

And God says, I've waited a long time to hear you say that. I didn't want to see your attempts to improve and try and be better and bite your tongue and not let it out. I wasn't interested.

I've been waiting a long time to hear you say, oh God, I'm wrong. And now at last you've come to that place, I'm going to tell you, you are right with me. You go down to your house utterly right with me because of that sacrifice on the altar in a way that that other fellow who was so pleased that he was right doesn't go.

Indeed, the man who said he was right at the front, God says, you're wrong. But the man at the back who said he was all wrong went down to his heart, declared, counted, absolutely right with God. Isn't that beautiful? Isn't this the greatest inducement to take the sinner's place? Then you get the sinner's righteousness and the sinner's peace and the sinner's joy and the sinner's title to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

Some of us are trying to get the good Christian's peace or the soul winner's peace or the consecrated one's peace and you can't sort of make it, you never quite get it. But there's another peace available. It's the only peace there is, it's the sinner's peace made for you by the Lord Jesus on the cross and when you take a sinner's place you walk right into it.

If there's an argy-bargy going on, everybody's saying it's the other person's fault and someone who's remained silent says, fellas, I'm sorry, I've been involved in you in telling, talking about the other people, I'm the fellow who's wrong, my attitudes have been wrong, do you know he's the only one who's right in the circle? All the others are wrong. This man's right. Look at his face, peace, hallelujah, he said he was wrong and now I'm praising Jesus, the blood has reached me now.

And you know you can't be more right than what the blood makes you when you confess yourself to be absolutely wrong. Isn't that beautiful? In an overall sense this is true but in a practical daily sense, if you're

going to enjoy this overall justification, you must be going this way and it's renewed to you again and again and your soul begins to take wings. You know I don't often enumerate things, you know, I thought I might this morning for a change, you know, I've got to, heading five, now I come to heading six, this is the last heading before we come to this very practical application.

It's terribly important to get the foundation right. Now this great blessing of being counted right with God is the fundamental blessing of the Gospel, shown by the fact that when Paul in Romans 7 says, I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation, he then goes on to tell you what its first blessing is, for therein is revealed a righteousness from God, revealed from faith to faith. For therein is there revealed for the biggest flop and sinner a perfect rightness with God available on the easiest possible terms.

And so rightness with God, which is counted to the one who confesses himself to be wrong with God, is the foundational blessing of the Christian life. It's forgiveness about which we've been thinking, it's more even than cleansing, though they all are different aspects, to think that I'm not only forgiven and cleansed, but judicially counted utterly right with God, so I've got a perfect title and boldness to walk into the holy of holies of God's presence as if the place belonged to me, which it does through the blood of Jesus. The blood of Jesus sprinkled within the holy of hoeses has made that intimate place of fellowship yours as a failure, as a sinner, if you will only confess it.

Not even the archangel Gabriel has a better rightness with God than the weakest of us who confesses his wrong, yes, for our righteousness is the blood of Jesus, indeed it's Jesus himself. Because the sinless Saviour died, yes, we read, we thought about another one, when Satan tempts me to despair, and tells me of the wrong within, upward I look and see him there, who made an end of all my sin, my righteousness, and not even the archangel Gabriel has a better rightness with God than what you have when you come and hide under the blood of Jesus and live there. What boldness! And it's fundamental to the Christian life because with this great initial blessing goes every other.

Being justified by faith, what? We have peace with God. And what else? We rejoice in hope of the glory of God. I'm on my way to the glory land.

How do you know? I've been declared right by faith. Peace with God? I rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, and not only so, but I rejoice in tribulations, because knowing I'm right with God, I cannot interpret any of the hard things that come against me as some sort of punishment, as if God's got a big stick in his hand. Rather, I find him with me in my tribulations, and I find comfort in them.

And it all stems from this great foundational blessing of the gospel. Now, I believe it's possible to try to get those blessings without getting the foundation right. I believe there are many people who may be very unsure of their foundational relationship with God, who've tried so hard to get joy and peace and comfort, and they rarely in all sincerity imagine they do so.

I sometimes ask the question, now, are you saved? Oh, Mr. Heston, I had this sorrow, I lost my baby. I couldn't have gone through it without the Lord Jesus. They got so much help.

And all I can say, I had the gravest doubt as to whether that one had ever seen herself utterly guilty before God, completely without excuse, and in her case, God had justified the ungodly. She was getting or appearing to some of the fruits of that without the real thing. And sometimes ministers are put in a fix because they have such good, nice people in their congregation who love their church, and they love their

vicar or minister, and they're so devout and kind that really they find it very hard to doubt that person's salvation.

They say, well, of course, I believe they're coming along, and they're rather, you know, they're fine, they really do love the Lord. I know there appear to be some fruits. But has that person ever seen themselves lost and undone under the judgment of God, and seen the cross, and heard God declaring that one utterly right with himself, the ungodly, the sinner? Perhaps not.

I think it's right, we mustn't judge, and perhaps we want to be generous, but I want to tell you, some of these dear, good people that we feel we cannot but credit with being one of God's children, the time comes when God speaks to them, and they tell us, you know, I never have been a Christian. What I had before was just phony, was just human effort. Now, soon as my all I ventured, on the atoning blood, the Holy Spirit entered, and I was born of God.

And so, it is nothing, I don't think all sermons go through, or she's through. One day she'll tell us she isn't. Don't let them off.

Don't say peace, peace, when there is no peace. Don't be censorious, but let God do his work. On any count, if you'd had John Wesley in your congregation, you'd say, well, I think he's all right.

I know he's not quite evangelical, he doesn't put it the way we do, but he does love the Lord. But the time came when Wesley said, it's only yesterday that I got peace with God, and it shook all his threads. They said, if you were not a Christian until yesterday, where does that put the rest of us? And he wasn't very popular among certain circles, understandably.

Oh, but this is the foundational. When I fled to the cross for refuge, and heard this God of grace to care this poor old sinner right with himself, fully absolved by thee I am, then I have peace with God. Then I can rejoice.

Then I've got all his comforts with me through any and every tribulation through which I go. All right, now we come to the very personal application. You know, one of the, there are many what you might call spin-offs from this great initial and foundational and ongoing experience of being counted right with God.

And as I've said, one of the spin-offs, one of the personal applications is this one in Romans 8.33. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? But the man who knows himself, declared right with God, on the grounds I've said, isn't frightened. He needn't be worried at what his critics say of him. Now everybody has their critics.

Anybody in Christian service has their critics. The godliest pastor has his critics. And you, though you may not be in a prominent position, you have your critics.

But if you know where you stand with God, that he has justified you, who in the world is going to lay anything to your charge if they try? Why in the world should you have any sleepless nights? Why should you cringe and lose your confidence when you move amongst them? Now this is tremendously important because as I've already said, some of us do worry. This is a very big thing. A very big thing.

And I believe we need to lay hold of a sweet balm of what we've been saying. Dear one, if it's God that justifies you, and he's the only one that matters, who in the world can lay anything to your charge? But notice, who is it that God justifies? The man who's innocent of the things about which he's criticised? The

man who's so right and they're so wrong to oppose him? Hey, we're off the ground of grace if that's the case. Because this matter of God justifying with it then goes vindicating too.

It is always implied his justification of the sinner is also his vindication of the sinner against all who come against him. So dear one, if you're having a hard time, God is not only justifying you, but he's prepared to take up arms in your defence and say no weapon that has formed against him shall prosper, and every tongue that has risen against him in judgement shall he condemn. But please notice that the one for whom he does this is a sinner who confesses himself to be a sinner.

God never justifies anybody but the ungodly. It's the ungodly man who's seen himself to be such and knows peace with God that then God says woe betide anybody who touches him. And Isaiah 45 is very important here.

Will you turn to it? Isaiah 45 verse 17. And that's not the verse. Perhaps someone can find it for me.

Let me quote it to you. I know it so well. No weapon that has formed against thee shall prosper.

It's the end of one of those chapters. I've just put the wrong one. Here we are.

Here we are. 54, 17. Great verse.

No weapon that has formed against thee, dear one, shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgement thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness or their vindication is of me, not of themselves, of me. But always on the basis on which his first justification of me was, that I'm the wrong one.

It's God justifying before others the sinner who's been to the cross to confess himself such. It is not God saying, as we'd like, showing us right. They'll just see how right I am.

Go on, you're on my side, you'll show them how right I am. And then the time will come, sit there, didn't I say so? Oh no. It's simply God owning you as his, as his servant, as his child, one who's made many a visit to his cross, confessed himself wrong on this, that, and the other, and God takes up his cudgels on that man's behalf, and he doesn't declare this man was right all along, but this man is my own special man, my own special woman, and he demonstrates it.

The man himself knows what he is. I suppose all these things are best illustrated from experience. For 40 years it's been my privilege to be a trapped preacher, as I sometimes call it, in evangelistic and Bible teaching work.

And over those years, one has had one's critics. Nobody can there be who doesn't have their critics, both personally and with regard to the things I've tried to say. And over many years have I had that, and I say, well Lord, now you, you, you vindicate me, you see? You, you show.

Let it be known this day that thou art God and Israel, and I'm thy servant. It's what Elijah prayed. But when I went to prayer, I never felt that my case was really quite good enough for God to show me to be right.

There was always something where I instinctively knew I was wrong, and I had no confidence in really expecting God to rise on my behalf, because I wasn't altogether innocent of the things the critics said. And if they didn't spot the real things, God had spotted them. I might have been innocent of perhaps comparatives of some things, but oh, oh, I knew there were so many others, and God was showing them

to me, and therefore I had no, I thought my case wasn't good enough, therefore I could never enter in to God's vindication of his servants, until God took me back to this very text.

He said, your, my, your righteousness, your vindication is of me. Tell me, how did I first vindicate you as mine? How did I first justify? It was altogether of me when you confessed yourself to be a sinner. He says, my further vindications of you are going to be on the same basis.

And so I used to go to the cross on this, that, and the other. And the vindication I could only expect for was not to show everybody I was right, and they'd go so wrong, but he simply owned another sinner as his own, and was pleased to use him or do something with him. Do you see? And what it means is this.

If you've been to the cross and had a fresh experience and renewal of the consciousness of being declared right with God, because you confessed yourself wrong, you couldn't look anybody in the face. If they think you're this, that, and the other, you say, well, brother, that's exactly what the Lord's shown me. You couldn't, you couldn't be truer, righter, to use a wrong expression.

Very often, the Lord's shown you that, and a lot more, and you can share it with them. There was a time when we were much criticised, Revel and me, in the early days, when revival first came, and there was a great deal of criticism. And doors were shut, not only to me, but to that little early team all over the country.

And I remember Revel being almost frightened to go out to the door of our flat in Bristol, lest she should meet some Christian who she felt was criticising us. But we said, they'll see, time will show how right we are. But the time came when God showed us where we were lopsided in what we were trying to share.

We'd seen a new vision, but aspects of the vision had got a little more in the centre than Jesus himself. And in our anxiety not to miss anything, the harder the thing, the more we felt we had to do it. And God had to show us, through William Lagenda, who came back five years later, that we'd got under law to walking in the light and other aspects of things.

Don't burden yourself if you don't know what these terms mean, because we're through on that now. We don't want you to wade through all our particular mistakes. And it was he who said, it's Jesus in the centre.

These things have their place, but not central. Otherwise they become law to you and they nearly kill you, having to try and cough up everything to somebody else in fellowship. It not only nearly killed us, but it put other people in bondage.

And though people couldn't discern what it was that seemed to draw them back, others were greatly helped, but some, God showed us what they couldn't express. And you know that early team repented. They said, Lord, we've been wrong.

It was a very hard time for us. One of those early years at Abu Dhabi, a very hard time for us. And only when I personally had repented, the others all had their story to tell, that God allowed me to go to America for the first time, I might have gone with a rather lopsided message, instead of which I simply went with the Gospel.

That Gospel which I'd preached to sinners, I was now preaching to saints. It was so simple, so right centred on Jesus, good news for bad people, even when the bad people happened to be converted. And you know, when I saw that, God says, now you've said you're wrong, you're right.

And I didn't mind anybody. If I met anybody who began, I said, yes, brother, sure, and a lot more than you don't know. And I was ready to give my testimony.

As it so happened, I didn't find myself often giving my testimony. There didn't seem to always be the occasion, but I had the testimony to give. And when I put it in one of our newsletters, oh, a lot of barriers began to come down.

Not everywhere. When you take the sinner's place, you won't satisfy all your critics, but you've made God and you've declared right with God. And if God justifies you, who shall lay anything to your charge? And I found myself free with people.

Just ready to give my testimony on these lines. And nothing more disarming when a man begins to share about himself more than you've criticized him for. And you're clad in that.

I'd like to say that sometimes I have acted in a way that showed me to be a son of Adam. And really I felt so ashamed in front of other people. And I found that, oh, what are they thinking of me? Sometimes my precious Pam has said to me, Roy, I didn't mind personally you speaking to me in that sharp, impatient way.

But if it was in front of all those other Christians, oh, I'd feel so terrible. What do they think? I'm supposed to have written Cowdery Road. What do they think? And you know, I found myself wanting to rush round and sort of give a bit of testimony, etc.

Not as testimony, but simply to reinstate myself in their eyes. And the Lord says, stop it. Come back to the cross.

And I did. He said, Lord, I was wrong. Absolutely wrong.

He said, now you're right with me. And then I said, if they think I'm a pretty low-down type of Christian, and even if they think me a hypocrite, if they think the truth, Amen, brother! You're dead right, but the blood of Jesus is availed. And knowing myself right with God through the blood, I can be free.

And I'm owned as his as I take that place. This needs a lot more amplification. But this is not only the way of walking through the criticism of others, but it's the way of meeting the accusation of the devil.

Agree with thine adversary quickly when you've been to the cross. Of course you don't have to make white into black. You mustn't make a formula of this.

Maybe our testimony won't satisfy them all, but if God has declared you right, and he had dealings with you, can you have a better righteousness before him or the world than this? And I want to tell you, clad in that righteousness, the sinner's righteousness, you can reprove, rebuke, with all long-suffering, as Paul urged Timothy to do. Because you've been to the cross yourself. You've had things to tell them, and some things, yes, yes, and a great deal more than you think.

And then, clad in that boldness, you can really help those. And they know that what you're saying is not out of self-defense. You're concerned that the flesh is operating.

And your very boldness is in use of God. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Which elect know what the cross is? Which elect are quick to go to that blessed place at the feet of Jesus? There God justifies them, the highest authority in the land. That's one of the many, and very blessed, spinoffs of God

justifying the ungodly for Christ's sake.

Amen. Let's pray. Lord Jesus, we love you this morning.

We love you because you're the sinner's friend, and we're sinners. Lord, we love you because you've got something good for failed saints, and we're often in that condition. Lord, sometimes we feel like hugging your feet, washing them almost with our tears of love and gratitude.

For this great miracle of grace. Oh, we thank you for thee, for thee doing this great thing for us. And may some of us here shed the last bit of self-reproach.

If there's something that's got to be acknowledged to thee, may it be acknowledged, and may the last shred of self-reproach and blaming ourselves and all the rest be gone. Because you don't impute iniquity unto us. You've imputed it all to thy beloved Son, and you want us as free as grace can make us.

And with regard to our brothers, just interpret these things. Some of us may have a lot to think about how this is to apply. Will you do that, Lord, for us? Because we can't always apply thy word to current situations if we do it in our own strength.

But dear Lord, set our poor captive spirits free to rejoice in thee and to be free with our brothers and even free and loving to our critics. We ask it in thy dear name's sake. Amen.

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