

The Gospel For A Godly Life

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[0:00] Comfort in your life. We all need that, I think. We all need that, I know. Moms' parenting can be so frustrating, can't it?

! The same selfishness that you've always struggled with and you're losing heart. You're growing weary. You're growing cynical. We can become that way in well-doing. Husbands, you have your own battle. You want to love your wife. I imagine most of you do. But sometimes it's the same things over and over again. You want what you want and you're not changing. And you butt heads again and again. And you lose your temper and you say things that you shouldn't.

And you go away wounded, tired, hurt, disappointed in yourself even. How could you say those things again or do those things again?

[1:18] And it seems like God doesn't care. And you pray for change, but it's not happening. We are God's people. We want to live a godly life.

But we find instead of growing, so often we find ourselves shrinking. We find ourselves suffocating in our unbelief. We don't feel like in any way God is working in our lives.

And so we can become jaded and cynical. We don't feel that joy that Jesus has promised. And I don't think it's entirely uncommon. And so we say to ourselves, well, I need to start working on this. I need to start doing something so that I feel this joy that I'm supposed to feel so that I can really have change. And so I need to memorize more scripture. I need to pray more in this area.

And what we find is that the more we work, the more we find our own failures. We run into them again and again, and around and around we go.

[2:20] And so, brothers and sisters, what we need to hear is we need to hear the gospel again. We need to hear the gospel again. And I'm going to ask you not to say, oh, brother, I already know the gospel.

What can the gospel teach me? I'm trying to live a godly life here. I know I need the gospel to save me. But I'm trying to live. I'm trying to live a godly life.

And I say maybe it's because we have forgotten the gospel that we're not seeing the growth, the joy, the change that we long to see. And it's not for lack of trying.

It's for lack of remembering. Peter said something very interesting in 2 Peter. Will you turn there to 2 Peter 1 and verse 5?

2 Peter 1 and verse 5. Peter has something to say to people who want to grow in grace, grow in sanctification.

[3:26] And he tells us why sometimes we don't grow in those things. 2 Peter 1 and verse 5. For this reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness, and to goodness knowledge, and to knowledge self-control, and to self-control perseverance, and to perseverance godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.

For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and to be cleansed from his past sins.

Why don't we have all these characteristics that Peter is talking about? This goodness, knowledge, brotherly kindness, love, godliness. In increasing measure, it's not for not trying.

It's not for knowing, not knowing that we need them. We all know that we need these things if we're a believer. It's because we become nearsighted. I have my glasses on today because I'm nearsighted.

I can only see things that are very close in front of me. And we have forgotten, Peter says, the gospel. That we were cleansed from our past sins. And so, brothers and sisters, if you're weary,

you're suffocating, you're growing tired and well-doing, and you don't feel like you're finding these things in ever-increasing measure, the remedy is not moral law.

[5:03] The remedy is not for me to tell you, well, you really need to be doing these things. The remedy is the gospel. You need the gospel. You need to remember what Jesus has already done for you.

You don't need to think more about what you're supposed to be doing. You need to be thinking more about what Jesus has already done for you. And that's what I want to remind you of this afternoon.

Of the gospel. The gospel. So I have four questions this afternoon. And the first is, what is the gospel? What is the gospel? It's a word that we throw around a lot.

And it's a word that you probably could give me a very good definition of. But let's remind ourselves again. I'm going to invite you to turn to Romans chapter 4, verse 4. We looked at this in the morning worship.

And this is going to be the text for our meditation this afternoon. Romans chapter 4, verses 4 and 5. And remember, the question is, what is the gospel?

[6:04] And we could say a lot of things, but this is the heart of what the gospel is all about. Verse 4. Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation.

However, to the man who does not work, but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness. So what is the gospel?

The gospel is simply this, that God justifies the wicked who believe in him. God justifies the wicked who believe in him.

That's the heart of the good news. And I wonder if we've lost the goodness of it. The goodness of the good news. This is surprising.

Why would God be gracious to wicked people? Why would he be kind to wicked people? He's just. He's holy. He's on high. Why would he be kind to us when we've rebelled and we've turned this world upside down like we saw this morning?

[7:13] But this is the gospel. The thing that we wouldn't expect. God does. He justifies the wicked who believe in him.

Now the second question is this. The first question is what is the gospel? The gospel is that God justifies the wicked who believe in him. And the second question is what does it mean to justify? And again, you could probably give me a good definition, but let's remind ourselves again of what has happened in our life.

The heart of the good news is that God justifies the wicked. What does that mean? It means that he says you are righteous. He says the wicked are righteous.

God looks upon you when he justifies you as if you had never sinned. Never, ever sinned.

He looks upon you and he sees you as not a sinner, but as someone totally righteous. And so you stand before the judge of heaven and earth whose eyes are so holy he can't look on sin.

[8:17] And he says to you, you are righteous. How could he do that? It's more than just the judge declaring you innocent.

You know, when you come into the courtroom and the jury or the judge declares you innocent, it means that in this case you did not do the wrong that you were accused of.

Justification is more than that. It's the declaration that you are actually righteous. And so we need to drink this in. When God justifies you, when he saves you, he looks upon you and sees you as a person who has always done what is pleasing in his sight.

And he looks upon you as a person who has always focused on doing his will like it was your daily food, your daily bread.

He looks upon you as a person who always says, not my will, but your will be done. Who always keeps all of his commandments. Who has always loved others just as much as he loved himself.

[9:28] He looks upon you as if you are Jesus. You, he sees in Christ. And so when God justified you, he dressed you in all of the glorious righteousness of Christ.

And so all of Jesus' righteousness is yours. This is your foundation. He gives it to you. You're not only counted innocent of sin, but you are counted absolutely, gloriously good.

That's your standing before God. And that's what it means. God says he justifies the wicked. That's amazing.

You, dazzling, absolutely righteous in God's sight. Here's the third question. Now who does God justify?

Who does God justify? Well, who, according to the gospel, does God justify? Who he treats in this remarkable way as if they've never sinned and always obeyed.

[10:34] Look at verse 5. It says, Paul says, God justifies those who don't work. Who don't work. And those are some of the sweetest words in all of the Bible.

Because if it was left up to your working, you would never be justified. You never, ever, you would never, ever have God say you are righteous.

Because if it's up to your working, you'll never make it. However, to the man who does not work. To the man who does not work.

That's who God justifies. The gospel is for people who can't work. Now, if you can work and you can please God, then the gospel isn't for you. But if you're a sinner and you get tired of working, and you get tired of carrying the burden of, I've got to do right with God, then the gospel is for you.

It's for people who can't obey God. It's for people who don't obey God, who can't work. It's for, the gospel is for moms who struggle with raising their children, and who can't raise godly children.

[11:45] Who lose their cool, who lose their patience. It's for moms who mess up with their children, and it's for moms who mess up their children. That's who the gospel is for.

And the gospel is for dads who are too lazy to lead their family and family worship. That's who God says, you're justified. Those who don't work. It's for those who give up the efforts to try to work their own righteousness.

The gospel is for husbands who are struggling, who struggle to love their wives. It's the gospels for men and women and boys and girls who don't love God with all of their heart, mind, and soul, and strength, and who don't love other people like they love themselves.

You know, God only requires two things of us in His law. Basically two things. To love Him wholeheartedly, and to love other people just like you love yourself.

That's all God really requires. And everything else hangs on those two commands. But what do you find in your life? What do I find in my life?

[12:51] Are you able to obey? Are you able to really look God in the face and say, I love you with every single inch of my being? Well, we don't find that.

No matter how hard we try, we can't do it. But the good news is that the gospel is for people who don't work.

Who don't work. Who can't work. See, normally it works like this. You get up, you go to work, and you work hard, and you earn a paycheck. But in the gospel, it works like this.

You don't get up. You don't go to work. You don't earn a paycheck. And at the end of the day, you get Jesus Christ, His paycheck. That's grace.

That's the gospel. You didn't earn it. You didn't deserve it. And yet God completely counts you right. He treats you just like His very own Son.

[13:50] And so, brothers and sisters, do you see what this means? That your standing with God has nothing, nothing to do with your performance.

Has nothing to do with your performance. You're not more or less justified because you obey or you don't obey. Because you were totally unable to do anything in the first place when God justified you. You weren't able to work up anything when He said you're righteous. And so, it has nothing to do with whether you do those right things or not. And so, your standing with God does not ride the roller coaster of your obedience.

Sometimes you're obeying, and then you're in God's favor, and then you disobey, and God doesn't like you anymore, and back and forth. And sometimes we get this idea that that's our relationship with God. And this tells us that it has nothing to do with it because we did not work.

It's for those who don't work. So, when you sin against your children, and when you argue with your wife, when you fall into lust and greed and impatience and other sin, God is still for you.

[14:58] Believer, God is still for you. He still loves you. You're still on God's good side. There's no grudge. God isn't secretly harboring this hatred for you.

Yes, I'll say you're my child, but I really don't want you around. I really don't like you. I wish you would get away. It's none of that because He looks at you, and He sees you in Christ, and He loves you.

If He loved you when you couldn't work at all, when you couldn't do a thing, then why would that love change now?

He loves you. He's always loved you, and your performance has nothing to do with that. We need to think about that. You need to think about that. Well, someone might say, well, won't that just make people just go off the deep end?

Like, if they can just get away with anything, and their standing with God doesn't have anything to do with their performance, then why won't they just dive into sin and sin all the more? Because, well, only people who haven't tasted of God's grace would say something like that.

[16:04] Because when you understand that God's massive, unbelievable love that He has loved you with, that He's given His own Son to rescue you, to justify you, when that free grace grips you, you don't want to sin.

You want to obey. See, grace motivates this obedience in a way that the law of do this and live, or don't do it and die, never could do.

Grace moves us to obey. So who does the gospel say God justifies? It's the wicked. According to verse 5, it's the wicked. It's not only for those people who can't work, who don't work.

It's for the wicked. God justifies the wicked. And it's not that we just won't go to work, or we just don't go to work. It's just we won't go to work.

It's not that I won't get up and do the right thing. It's I don't want to do the right thing. This is more than just I'm unable. It's I'm rebellious. I'm in rebellion against God.

[17:13] We've all turned away. We've together become completely worthless. We're all sinners in rebellion against God. We're wicked. But this is the good news.

The people that are rebellious, God has justified. Those who believe in him. And so do you see the love of God? God loves sinners. He loves sinners.

He's justifying sinners. And if we are afraid to say that, then we have to say that God doesn't love us. Because that's what we are. We're sinners. He loves those who have rebelled against them, who sinned against him.

Jesus came to save sinners. And that's how he found us. He didn't come to save the righteous. God so loved the world that he sent his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

It's this wicked world that God has loved. It's this rebellious world that God has loved. And so, I ask you, have you forgotten that love that he loved you with?

[18:21] Have you forgotten where you were when God dressed you in Christ's righteousness? It wasn't that you were unable to work. It was you were completely not even wanting to work.

You were lost. And now some of you were elder brothers. The prodigal son story. Some of you were elder brothers. You stuck around.

You were trying to please God. You were trying to do the right things. And maybe you thought you were doing the right things. But you were always afraid of what you would lose. And you were always afraid of getting on the father's bad side.

And you were always working for the father's things. But you never cared about the father. And some of you were younger brothers. You said, I'm out of here. I want what I want. And I want it now. And God, you're not giving it to me. So I'm leaving. Well, either way, we were lost. We were completely lost. We were going our own way. We were going to destruction.

[19:20] That's every single one of us. And it was to those kind of wicked people, to you, that God came and justified. You were wicked and yet you were loved.

And so do you see what that means for you now? If he justified you when you were wicked, you don't have to pretend to be righteous now.

You don't have to pretend to be righteous now. You don't have to pretend to be strong. You can freely own what you are. You can freely own your sin and your weakness and your weaknesses before him.

Because God already knows your sin. He's already counted them all up. He knows all the sin that you've ever committed in your past. He knows the sin that you're living in and present. He knows all the sin that you're going to commit in the future.

He knows it better than you do. And he's put it all on his son. And he's punished his son for your sin. And so he loved you despite of your sin.

[20 : 29] He loved you and his love reached through your sin and it dealt with your sin. And so your present sin, the things that you are struggling with right now, can't turn him off.

It can't push him away. Your present struggles, your present failures won't turn his heart against you. God demonstrates his own love for us in this, that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

If he died, if he sent his son to die for us while we were wicked, then we don't have to be afraid to own what we are. So do you struggle, moms, to love your children?

God loves you. Go to him. Own what you are. Husbands, do you try to love your wife and you fail? God loves you.

Go to him and own what you are. Own your weaknesses. Own your sins. So, are you tired? Are you tired of grace fellowship?

[21 : 27] Tired of just doing the Christian life? Burn out spiritually? You know you are not supposed to feel this way and yet you do. Then, go to him.

He loves you. He is ready to hear. He is for you. You know that if he justified you when you were wicked, then he will accept you now.

Now that you are in Christ. So, here is the fourth question and the last. What do you have to believe to be saved? What exactly did you believe when you were saved?

Do you remember? Or what do you have to believe to be saved if you are outside of Jesus today? Well, look at verse 5. It is simple. It is just this.

It is just this. It is just that God justifies the wicked. To the man who does not work, but trust God who justifies the wicked. His faith is credited as righteousness.

[22 : 30] What do you have to believe to be saved? Just this, that God is good enough. He is gracious enough. He is kind enough. He is loving enough to justify the wicked.

All you have to do is believe the gospel promise. A couple of verses before, it says that Abraham believed God's promise.

And it was credited to Abraham as righteousness. And that is what saving faith is. It is believing the gospel promise. That God speaks to us for our encouragement with this promise to our own hearts. And it is simply this. Sinner, I am good. I am loving. I am full of love for sinners. And I have loved sinners so much that I have sent my one and only son to die for them.

To live for them. I punished my son for them. Believe that I am just that good. Believe that I am just that kind. That I love sinners just as they are just that much.

[23 : 42] And you will be saved. So my unbelieving friend, do you see what that means for you? There is nothing between you and everlasting life except for your unbelief.

All you have to do is believe that God is good enough. That what Jesus did was enough. That God sent his son to live that perfect life that you needed.

All you have to do is believe that he was that good enough. That kind enough. That he sent his son to the place of punishment. To justify the wicked.

All you need to do is believe and be saved. There is no work to do. Being a sinner is the only requirement. It is the only requirement. So if we are a sinner here, we can come to God through Christ.

And he will justify us. So don't bother cleaning yourself up. Because you don't need to. The gospel is for those who don't work. It is for those who believe. And we sing just...

[24 : 50] Well, we sing that in hymn 393. Come you sinners, poor and wretched. Hymn 393. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, at one time we were alive without the law.

We thought very well of ourselves. We thought we were doing okay. And then your law came to us. And we realized that we were not okay at all.

But we were covered with sores. From the top of our head to the bottom of our feet. That through and through we were nothing but sinners. Sinful.

Lord, we thank you for the gospel. Thank you for the law that shows us what we are. Thank you for the gospel that gives us what we need.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for being all for us. We boast of nothing else besides his death and his resurrection. His life is our only hope.

[25 : 56] His death is our only hope in these. When our conscience condemns us. And when Satan condemns us.

And on that day of judgment, when we stand before your throne. It will be Jesus' life and death. It will be our only plea. I pray, Lord, that you would wake up sinners to the gospel.

To your goodness. To your love. The words of my mouth are unable to do that. The words of any human are unable to do that.

Holy Spirit, come and take the gospel message and drive it home to all of our hearts. Especially to those who are outside of Jesus. Who are on the wide road that leads to destruction.

Turn them around. Oh, good shepherd, go out and rescue sheep today. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.