

Session five: About justification

(Chapter 6)

Goals for Today

1. Understand the nature of justification
2. Recall our own experiences of awareness regarding our own justification

Justification = receiving a pardon

- In the Bible God is often referred to in one of two different roles: King or Father. However, when we speak of either King or Father, it's easy for some people to have negative connotations.
 - Regarding the term King: If we talk about the Kingdom of God, what is a kingdom without a king or queen? And since God is motivated by love, God is a ruler who loves, protects, and cares.
 - Regarding the term Father: The Lord's prayer itself starts off with "Our Father..." and if you can imagine a perfect father, the father of your dreams...that would be God, only God would be better still.
- Today's topic falls into the category of Kingly duties...maintaining justice and order in creation
 - That requires "setting limits". There must be a consequence for wrongdoing, or wrongdoing would become our experience forever—both committing it and suffering from it. Imagine if there was no consequence to theft, or if speed limits on the roads were never enforced. It would not be pretty.
 - Here is God's response to wrongdoing: Rom 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the **gift** of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Death here is typically thought of as spiritual separation from God—in some ways a natural consequence of going apart from God on our own initiative.)
 - The big picture is that God's decisions about all this has not been arbitrary. There is wisdom here. God's goal has always been an eternal heaven populated by God's chosen family. For that to happen, God must be a gatekeeper of sorts to see that heaven does not become like earth has, full of people capable of violence and all sorts of ill will. God's invitation for all to join in the joy there has been real. However, we have been given the choice to accept or refuse the invitation.

Where this pardon fits into the process of becoming a Christian

Our author has indicated that coming to the point of following Jesus—becoming a Christian—is a *process*, enabled by grace.

1. It starts with imagining that knowing God must, or at least even might, be a good thing.
 - Heb 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, for anyone who comes to him must *believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*
2. It continues with developing remorse about our wrongdoings **and** our inability to live as we know we should. It includes an acknowledgment of guilt. This is an awareness enabled by God's grace.
3. We then commit ourself to trust and follow Jesus...**accepting God's gift of mercy: God accepting Jesus's death as the accomplishment of the sentence that we would have received otherwise...** This is justification...the *imputing of* righteousness before the law (think of a courtroom) which we did not actually earn. Justification is the event that prevents us from experiencing the wages of sin forever.
4. And we then continue that commitment to live a new life by living according to the power granted to us by the indwelling Christ. This is called another big word—sanctification—*imparting* the ability to choose to live a holy life, another act of God's grace.
 - Simply “accepting a deed to a new house” is not enough...we must also commit to being a “good neighbor”, so to speak. If we think that throwing down our “Jesus pays” card to cover a steady stream of willful, defiant acts, the issue of sincerity of repentance would arise, and it would be the “cheap grace” talked about in the text. Forgiveness is not a license to do wrong without consequence or concern.

Discussion

- Is this two-fold distinction meaningful to you? In what way?
- Do you remember a time when any of this became real to you? What happened?

What is the really big point of all this?

- As children of God (think of what THAT alone means!), we can have peace about eternity and trust God to bring us through this difficult life intact.
- And even more importantly, we are free to be really vulnerable with God about our deepest hopes and wishes.

Homework

1. Chapters 7 & 8
2. Continue to pray for our sessions, for them to result in understanding and wisdom on our part, that we gradually put to action in our own lives.

① Welcome + names

② Quiet time

③ Prayer

④ @ A time when God has helped you

⑤ Why you're in this group

⑥ what you look forward to in group

⑦ what you would not want to happen in group

Discussion

Prayer - sentence for others + self