

Faith Fights to Believe Justification

A sermon in the series
What Faith Must Fight For

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Galatians 5:1-6

Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. ² Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. ³ And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. ⁴ You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. ⁵ For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. ⁶ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.

Our theme verse for this series is 1 Timothy 6:12,

“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”

We must fight the good fight of faith. When I say there are things faith must fight for I do not want you to misunderstand and think that if you simply possess faith that's all that's required. Faith is a gift given to us by God but it doesn't have a mind of its own. Just having faith is not enough. You have to exercise it. It's your faith. In other words, it's you trusting, you depending, you leaning upon and believing God. Faith does not fight while you watch on the sidelines. You have to fight.

On the other side of the fence, without faith you will not fight. Therefore you must possess it to even be involved in the conflict of faith. And unless you believe what God has said you will have no cause to fight for. Rather than the shield of faith extinguishing the fiery darts, the darts will extinguish your faith and you will not trust God. To every man God has given a measure of faith; this is our certainty today. Every believer here has a measure of faith. So the admonishment is this: use your faith and fight. Don't stand there taking it. This is the one time you can fight back and it is godly. Our victory comes when we use our faith against each attack on our mind to doubt God.

The Apostle John tells us in 1 John that “whatever is born of God overcomes the world, and this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith.” Our faith leads us to victory if—and only

if—we use it in the battle.

These words might seem pointless to you, almost like kindergarten. It's basic, but I say it because there are some whose faith is in their faith. They're trusting in their faith and not Jesus and they never seem to fight using their faith. They are content to have it and that's enough. Let me ask you this—is it enough for a soldier to have a weapon? Is it enough that he has that weapon loaded with ammunition? No, it isn't enough unless he takes aim and pulls the trigger. He must fire on the enemy. Our faith must never be left as a sword in the scabbard. Take it out and start wielding it. That's the only way to victory.

The first front I want to deal with in this series, in which we must continually battle in order to maintain belief, is the doctrine of justification. For some of you this seems to be no battle at all because you truly believe your salvation from God is irrevocable, meaning He will not take it back, so you remain quietly confident in your justification. I applaud this position. It is my position and it is the Bible's position. Salvation is irrevocable. God has made a covenant with you. A covenant is not a contract, it's better; it's a pledge of one's self to another. He has pledged Himself to get you safely home, and you're not home yet. You can rest assured that you will not be lost if you have been justified by God.

However, there are others of us who, for whatever reason, have our confidence shaken from time to time. Assurance of our position with God evaporates, leaving us exposed with doubt and anxiety. Thus, it would seem that only those kinds of folks, those who suffer from insecure justification, need to learn to fight this battle to believe in justification and all others are safe and don't need to worry about this theater of battle. But that would not be true.

Everyone receives assaults on the blessed truths of justification. Every one of us. The devil will not leave well enough alone. No one is exempt, those who are settled in the fact of their justification may not be tempted to doubt their salvation but are tempted to live not by faith but in their works. Or, this is a great tendency and temptation, you're so secure in your justification by faith that you are tempted to stray away from justification into antinomianism, a false teaching that says salvation by grace removes any obligation or necessity for obedience. In other words, you are so secure in your salvation that you no longer see it necessary to obey God because if it's by grace you can't introduce works at all. I want you to hear me clearly—that is an attack on the doctrine of justification by faith alone. That's not what the doctrine of justification says.

All of us are engaged in this battle. It's an active field of war for us as it was for the Galatian Christians, many of whom had come to Christ through the ministry of the Apostle Paul. Our text is telling us of Christians who were being tempted to no longer trust that God had justified them by faith alone, and that they needed to **do** certain things in order to be right with God. They were being tempted to believe that righteousness, which means a right position with God, is not something freely given through faith, but that it is earned.

In this particular case these Christians had been deceived into believing they had to add to their

faith the works of becoming a Jew. They had to be circumcised, they had to eat Kosher, they had to attend to all the Jewish feasts and holidays, including the weekly Sabbath and they were beginning to believe it. They were succumbing to that false doctrine and misunderstanding what it means to be right or justified before God. And so Paul writes to them and spends a great deal of the book explaining once again this beautiful doctrine of justification by faith alone. He says to them in this fifth chapter that if they try to gain favor with God by your works they were separated from Christ and had fallen from grace. Does that mean they had lost their salvation? No, it means they were not walking and believing in grace alone, but they were putting their trust in the law, which is their own works.

I. SALVATION EXPLAINED

Let's go back to the basics again. I think of Vince Lombardi, who, after having lost a strategic game, went back to the locker room, held up a football and said, "Gentlemen, this is a football." He started with the basics, he went back to their Mighty Mite days. When you lose in the battle it's usually over a fundamental reason, something that should be basic and essential, but yet forgotten. So we really need to understand what it means to be justified by faith in Christ alone.

The doctrine of justification = God declares you righteous through the satisfactory and substitutionary work of Jesus on the cross.

Righteous is not *holy*, those are two different things. Righteousness means you are completely perfect and obedient before Him. It deals more with your behavior and attitudes. When you put your faith in that substitutionary and satisfactory work of Jesus on the cross, then the Bible says that God looks upon you, a vile and wicked person, and declares you righteous just like Jesus Christ.

A. What Salvation Is.

What does it mean to be declared righteous and what does that have to do with me being saved from sin and hell?

Salvation is to be considered as perfect as God is.

Salvation means to be righteous just like God. I've been asked before, "What must I do to be saved?"

To one man I said, "Well, that's easy. The Bible says you have to be perfect just like God." And his face literally turned pale. You could see the blood leave his face, because he got it. Another man asked me one day and I said, "Just be perfect like God, morally perfect, meaning that from birth to death you must never sin. That's the standard. That's what it means to be saved. From birth to death you are perfectly righteous in your behavior and in your heart." He became very angry, but thank God he began to understand and was later converted.

It's amazing to watch people respond when you say something like that. It's usually a stunned look and then they have to gather their brain because it's completely left them and they have to find it. And once they find it and you can see the thinking begin and they come back with all sorts of questions. "No, no, no, you must have misunderstood what I meant. I mean what does it take to go to heaven?"

"What I said. You've got to be perfect, just like God."

"Well, I have never been perfect. I've sinned."

"You've got a big problem then, don't you?"

And we all do.

"For all have sinned and have come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)

None of us from birth to death have obeyed perfectly. None of us have done the right thing with the right motive for our entire life and yet that is what is necessary to be right with God. Listen to me, the gospel of grace and the cross have not changed God. God cannot be changed.

If He is a God He has to be perfect and to be perfect means He must be unchangeable for if God ever changed it means He was never perfect. If He wasn't perfect to begin with and then changed to become perfect He's not God. If He's perfect and then changes He is less than perfect now and He would not be God. In order for God to be who He says He is, He has to be unchangeable.

The cross did not change the standard by which a man is admitted into the presence of God. "Who may ascend the hill of the Lord or who may stand in His holy presence? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart who has not lifted up his soul to an idol nor has sworn deceitfully." That has always been God's standard and still is right now. Sir, unless you've been perfect before God, you cannot hope today in your own self to be saved when you die.

B. The Moral Inability to be Righteous.

You cannot hope in yourself, which means then, therefore, salvation is absolutely impossible. It's morally impossible for man to be righteous. The sinner cannot be righteous as God is, nor can I live righteous before God in my own strength now that I'm saved. It's a moral impossibility. Just getting saved and having Christ, the Holy Spirit of God, living within you does not change the moral impossibility of you being sinless. Because you're not. Glorification is coming but it hasn't happened yet. I believe that God could never and would never design a Christianity without the saint needing Christ always. So now that means therefore that salvation is impossible to all of us.

With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.

II. JUSTIFICATION EXPLAINED

If salvation is to be as righteous as God is, then what is justification? It is the giving of that righteousness.

A. Justification is the Pardon of Sins.

In order for you to be declared righteous, God has to deal with the sins you've already committed and not only the sins you've already committed, but the sins you will commit in the future. Yours sins have to be dealt with. God cannot say of you and me, "They're righteous" when we are not. He cannot wink at our sin. He is not an unholy God who can dismiss and ignore our unrighteousness. Justification therefore is the pardon of our sins. It's the forgiveness of sins. Listen to the Apostle Paul in Colossians 2:13-14,

"And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."

And so God, in order to declare you righteous—to justify you—means He has to give you a full pardon. A full pardon of all of your sins: past, present and future. But as spectacular as that sounds that's not that big of a deal. A governor or president can pardon any criminal. Any governor or man with the authority to pardon can release anyone in prison within his jurisdiction and forgive him of his debts to society. But that doesn't justify that criminal. The criminal will still carry the guilty of the crimes committed by his own hand. The forgiveness of his sins can be issued, the debt can be paid in full, but he is still the one who committed them and thereby his guilt is not altogether removed.

B. Justification is the Gift of Righteousness.

Not only did He pardon you from your sins and remove the guilt, but in its place He gives you, righteousness. He gives you right standing with Himself. How does He do that? Listen to Romans 4:6,

"just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works:"

You don't earn it, but He gives it to you as a gift by:

I. Refusing to Impute Your Sins to Your Standing.

Impute means to *put on your account*. How many of you would agree that God has an account for each one of us and that everything you've done, good or bad, is listed on that account? We all

believe the Bible teaches that. Justification is a gift of righteousness by God refusing to put on your account your sins. He not only forgives me of my sins, but He expunges the books so that there is no record or evidence that I ever was guilty of those sins. The law could still point its finger and say to a pardoned criminal, *The governor may have pardoned you but we still know you did it. The court of your peers found you guilty, the evidence said you did it, and we know you did it!* And all you can say to the law is, *Yes. Forgiven but still guilty.* However, God goes one step further and does what no what no man or court can do. He goes back and expunges from the record your crimes so that you are no longer guilty of them. It truly is as if you had not sinned. Look at Romans 4:7-8,

“Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, And whose sins are covered; Blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin.”

I don't know how else to explain this to get the gravity, the seriousness, the importance of this over except to say it in a way that is very dangerous. What I'm saying to you is the Bible teaches to be justified by faith through God's grace apart from my goodness, my works, my obedience, my efforts, means that if I should sin, if I should say something that is a lie, if I should castigate and speak evil of someone here with an evil heart, if I should step down out of this pulpit and attack one of you physically and sin, God does not put that sin on my record, it never shows up anywhere in His records.

Why did I say that was dangerous? Because there could be someone who would hear that and say, “I can now sin without any consequences and it's okay.” But my dear friend, that's not what I said. The Bible is very clear that the redeemed are in a process where sin is becoming the abnormal. We'll deal with sanctification on another Sunday.

I'm getting older, that means I've got a long list of sins behind me. But when I look back and try to find them and say, “But Lord, look at all the sins I have committed,” God says, “There are no sins. I've got your book right here. Here's your record and there's nothing there and I keep good books, Michael. What are you talking about?”

2. The Imputation of the Perfect Obedience of Christ to Your Standing.

Not only does justification include the God's refusal to impute your sins to you, but also He imputes the perfect obedience of Jesus Christ to you.

Here is our problem—God may consider us innocent of the charges. He may consider us not guilty and justify us, but we still have a problem. We still have a fallen nature that, if we're not careful, will deceive us.

I still sin. I have no hope of being perfectly obedient from this moment forward. But God doesn't just want a clean white sheet on your record. He commands me to do the works of righteous-

ness. How can I do this? How can you?

Please listen carefully, to be right with God and to be saved doesn't mean the absence of sin, it also calls for the presence of obedience. To be justified, not only means that I have no record of sin against me, but that I do what God does. We can say it this way—salvation is not just abstaining from sin from birth to death, but from birth to death doing exactly what God would do all the time. That is what righteousness is. Can you get into heaven? No, none of us can. So what does God do? He gives to you as a gift the perfect obedience of His Son.

“For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous.” (Romans 5:19)

Jesus' obedience is transferred and given to us as a gift so now when God looks at our records it's not an empty, white sheet of paper with a name on it, but it has every command fulfilled and marked “done”. Everything He has ever told us to do: done. Why? Because Jesus did it.

Now brother and sister, that's what you've got to fight to believe. That's where faith now has to take its aim and say, “This is the truth as God has declared it and I will fight devil and man to put my stake here and believe what God has said.”

C. Justification is God's Acceptance of Christ Given to the Sinner.

Not only has God taken away all your sins and guilt as if you had never committed them, but then He puts in their place the obedience of Jesus. Because you can't be saved just by His death alone, you had to be saved by His life. He had to perfectly obey God in our place. That's why He was baptized. When Jesus came to John the Baptist to be baptized, John said, “No, I ought to be baptized by You.” Jesus said, “No, this fulfills all righteousness.” Why? He was doing everything He did in our place for us as a substitute as well as for Himself. As a result God can give you the status of His own Son and accepts you as such.

“Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” (Romans 5:9-10)

Perfect obedience is given to you and you're saved by His life. Why? Because you've been put into that very life.

“to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.” (Ephesians 1:6)

You are in Christ, therefore, you have gained the same acceptance that Jesus has with the Father and that never changes. So that means this, dear child of God, that in your most vile and rebellious moment you will never see the back of God's hand. There is no wrath, no violence, no

hatred against us anymore because we have been accepted in Christ. If you do not believe what I just said is the Gospel and if you start looking for exceptions, then you have taken away your ability to fight for this doctrine. There are no exceptions.

I know it's dangerous and I know what some of you are worried about. Some of you are worried that some here will believe that if you just get yourself on the books, sin will become powerless. Let me tell you something, how can you hear what I've just told you and be the recipient of that kind of love and turn around with great spite and shove it back into God's face with your rebellion? Not he who has been truly saved. A religious lost man, yes, he's going to be happy and take what he's heard as an excuse for his sins and his unrighteousness, but the child of God will grieve all the more when he sins because he believes what he's just heard.

III. THE MAKING OF JUSTIFICATION POSSIBLE

How can God treat us like this when it's not true? Because of 2 Corinthians 5:21 and a whole host of other texts we could read to you.

“For He (God) made Him (Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

This story is not so unfamiliar to us. We know it well, Jesus came to the Father and said, “In their place I will die. I will be the sacrificial and paschal lamb. I will do what they cannot do and God, My Father, level against Me all that Your infinite wrath and justice can muster, level it against this heart, give it all to Me. Do not relent in the least, I want every penalty for every one of their sins and I want it to be on Me so that it's as if You are striking them.”

Jesus also received a gift in this transaction called justification but it's not like our gift. He was given all your sins, all your guilt, and all your rebellion and the Father treated Him as if it were you on that cross. Therefore, we are not saved by any effort that we do, nor do we stay saved by anything we do. We are saved by faith alone through Christ alone. Period! That is the blessed news and there is no blessed news if that isn't true. If I have to start reforming my life and living perfectly now that I am saved I am as doomed as I was the day before I was saved.

IV. THE ATTACK AGAINST JUSTIFICATION

A. Righteous Performance Prior Justification.

Let's go back to Galatians 5. Paul exhorts Christians to stand fast in the liberty in which Christ has made them free. In other words, do not succumb to a salvation, a righteousness earned by your works. Don't be entangled in that bondage when God has set you at liberty. There is nothing required of you to do in order to be declared righteous—that's freedom. But if you insist that for God to look at you with favor or disfavor depends on something you do, then it's as like the Judaizers saying one must be circumcised in order to be saved. This is the warning of the Apostle

Paul. If you believe God's perception of you changes by what you do or don't do, then you have run back to the law of performance and forsaken the cross of Jesus Christ. That's what Paul means when he says "you have fallen from grace." You have said no to the gift and have returned to your own labors. Friends, let me make this clear: Righteous performance before justification saves nobody. You cannot be good enough. You cannot be righteous enough. Salvation does not come to the sinner by his good works. I don't care how good you were before you were saved.

I will never forget my son Joseph's response the day we were shucking corn and I asked, "Son, what's God doing in your life?" He said, "Well, dad, I don't know. I know I'm a sinner, the Bible says I'm a sinner, and you tell me I'm a sinner. But I don't feel like one." He was a good young man as we judge goodness. What God needed to do for him is what He needs to do for some of you in this room today. He needs to show you that you're not as good as you think you are. And even if you are, it's not good enough.

Romans 5:6 tells me clearly that Jesus didn't die for the good. So if you are saying today, "Well, you know, I want to be a Christian but one of my problems is I don't feel like I'm that bad." Be careful. That is a dangerous place to be because God clearly didn't come to die for the good. The Bible says, "For when we were still without strength, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly."

"This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners..." (1 Timothy 1:15)

Not good people. Not the children of Christians, but sinners.

"But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness," (Romans 4:5)

Are you telling me, pastor, that I can't come to Jesus this morning knowing that because I've not murdered or looked at pornography or had an abortion I can't come to Jesus and bring my good works to Him as an offering?

That's exactly what I'm telling you. You can't bring it to Him.

I can't come to Him claiming that He ought to save me because I'm better than most? I don't rebel against my parents. Surely that must count for something?

Do you dare bring your righteousness into the presence of God? It counts for nothing. Come to Him upon your own merits and He will cast you out because on your best days your righteousness is like a filthy rag, a bloody, filthy, nasty rag. What is your goodness compared to Jesus'? We're not saved by our righteous performance. Our justification is not based upon our performance, so how can you as a believer listen to the devil's lie when he tells you that you can't be a Christian because your performance has been less than acceptable? Let's look at this more.

B. Righteous Performance After Justification.

“You have become estranged from Christ,”

This didn't mean the believers to whom Paul was writing lost their salvation but it meant they were not trusting in Jesus. In effect, the Galatians, by looking to their performance, and trying to become Jewish, accepting circumcision and eating Kosher was an act of withdrawal from Jesus and a trust in those things.

“you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.”

It was no longer trusting in grace but in their works. Now please listen. Here's my disclaimer—the Christian is to live righteously after justification. We will spend an entire sermon on this during this series. You are to live righteously and obey God. But I'm telling you, if you have been justified you *will* obey and live righteously. Perfectly? No. But you will live righteously.

Let me say this: the basis of our justification is not our works of righteousness but our Lord Jesus' works. The Bible says “the just shall live by faith.” Interesting it never says *the just are saved by faith*, it says they *live*. That doesn't mean every time you and I sin we need to be justified again, rather it means we have to fight to believe that we are justified. We have to believe what God has already said about us is true.

We have to exercise faith in Christ for the state of our conscience and assurance. You can doubt your salvation and be just as secure as the saint in heaven is right now. Your assurance does not have a thing to do with whether or not you're justified, and I'm so thankful for that. I went almost a whole year wondering if I was even saved after I had been converted. Thank God my level of assurance has nothing to do with my justification. However, I need to exercise faith in what God has said and what Jesus has done in order to maintain assurance.

Why must we fight to believe what God has said? Because we know ourselves all too well. We may have been forgiven from the penalty of sin but we still experience sin's presence in us. Some of us loathe sin to the point that we loathe ourselves. It's this presence of sin still in us that Satan uses to convince us that we could not have been saved, for if you've been saved you wouldn't do that.

If you've been saved you would not have done this; you used to do that before you got saved but not that you're saved you're not supposed to do that again. If you were a Christian you would no longer struggle with this sin.

You reply, “Pastor, I understand that's how the Devil works but isn't there some truth to that? Isn't it truth that I should be better than I used to be? I should be better. I should be more righteous than I am.”

Yes. I agree. We must grow in holiness and if we've been justified we will. Yes, I ought to be better than I am, but here is my question to you—how much better should you be? How much better should you be? Let's suppose you are morally much better now than when you were saved. But how does that justify you? What difference does that make? That's not how you were saved. Even if you could be near perfect in your behavior, just one sin would damn you. How much better do you have to be? You have to be perfect. That is the only answer. But none of us are there and none of us will get there on this side of heaven. This means that you are always in need of the sacrifice of Christ. We are justified only by His perfect performance, which has been given to us if we only believe.

Friends, listen to me, you don't want to go down the road of judging your salvation by human performance, unless you can be perfect. Please listen to me, I can spare you a whole lot of trouble and heartache and misery. You don't want to go down that road.

If you begin to determine whether or not you're saved or justified before God based upon how sanctified you are, then you have missed the Scriptures and you're in for trouble. That road will lead you back trying to gain God's acceptance through your performance. The law demands what you should do, but grace always says looks at Jesus Christ and see what He has done. The law says "Do" and grace says "Done!" The law says "Go" and grace says "Rest. Rest in Jesus."

The more holy you become the more sinful you feel. The more you walk in the light, the more the light shines into the corners and crevices of your life where sin hides. You will think, "I thought I cleaned this room three years ago, but there it is again." It's true, the closer to the light the more the light exposes. You read some of the biographies of those whom we call "God's great saints" and even up to the point of death, though they have perfect assurance and rest and peace in Christ, you read where they often lament their sinfulness. So if it's true that the more holy you become the more sinful you feel, how can a holy man or woman have peace that they are right with God? If the closer you get to God reveals the further you are from His likeness how could you have peace that you are indeed the child of God? That's a good question.

There is only one way—faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. That is the answer and it has always been the answer. It's trust in Jesus. Get your eyes off of yourself and look to Christ! That's the battle of faith.

How does the any man have peace with God? Justification by faith.

"Therefore having been justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand and rejoice in the hope and glory of God."

Not by our performance. If it's by my performance I am miserable. Even now that I am His I can claim only one thing—the cross. Ah, this is peace with God

It seems there was a man in England who put his Rolls Royce on a boat from England and traveled the English Channel to vacation in Europe, driving around in his car. But while on vacation, his Rolls Royce's engine began to have trouble and it quit working. So he contacted the manufacturer and to his amazement they flew a mechanic to where he was, fixed the car and the mechanic flew back to England. The man resumed his vacation. But when he returned to England and found no bill for the repair in his mail, he wrote the company and asked them how much he owed them. After a few days he finally received a letter that said this,

“Dear Sir, There is no record anywhere in our files that anything ever went wrong with a Rolls Royce.”

Now that's justification! There is nothing on the record. It's not that something didn't go wrong with the car but the Rolls Royce Company acted as if nothing was wrong. Now my illustration has a breaking point, doesn't it? It implies, though very slightly, as though God pretends there is nothing wrong with us. But that's not the blessed truth of justification. God knows something is wrong with us. We're not altogether Christ-like, but what God has done is He has already taken care of our struggles with sin in the life and death and resurrection of His Son. He does not impute our sin to our record because He has already imputed it to Jesus and settled it long ago. It's settled. Therefore, like the Rolls Royce customer, we owe the Lord nothing. Justice has already been satisfied. God does not have to pretend. Our justification is real. Biblical faith never demands you to deny reality in order to find peace. God's not saying, “I want you to pretend you're okay.” No sir, you are okay to Him.

But here is the problem. I know that I'm not okay and that's my problem. I still have some of the same hang-ups. I'm still proud. I've been saved 26 years and I still wrestle with pride. I still have to pray, *God help me to be humble*. Choose any of the seven days of the week, choose today if you wish, and I can find enough sin in this day to make my life miserable with condemnation. And if I had weighted down by condemnation, then my problem is not that I know I've got a problem, my problem is I don't understand how bad the problem is.

Our struggle to believe we've been justified is really a struggle to believe how bad sin really is. You see, when we sin and think if we would read our Bibles more, then God will accept us again, we don't understand how bad our sin really is. We sin and think we must go sit in some penalty box for a few days, then all will be well, because we have shown genuine sorrow for our deed. But this mentality proves we must not realize the wickedness of our sin to think we could by our own efforts atone for them.

If you think sitting in self-pity and loathsomeness will absolve sin you don't know sin. One sin is enough to send you to the flaming pits of hell to be chained to Satan forever. It is enough to earn you membership in the infamous club of the Hitlers and the Pol Pots. That one sin is as vile as genocide. You don't have any idea how bad your sin is. There is no way sitting in a penalty box for a few days is going to get you out of that situation. It is impossible for us to change the record. One sin against a holy God is sufficient to condemn me forever.

Last week I said the benefit of getting older is I have failed more. I have failed more than several of you because I'm older than you and have lived longer. One of the joys in my failures is that it has proven to me that I'm not righteous after all and that I can't be by my efforts. So now when I sin, yes I grieve, but I don't grieve like I used to. I'm actually full of joy in my grief. Oh, I hate sin, I loathe it and we'll talk more about that next week. But I am so happy that I have a Savior who paid it all. There is mourning over my sin but with it a joyful embracing of what Jesus has done for me.

***Jesus paid it all, All to Him I owe,
Sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow.***

And that's the way I stay—washed. Otherwise, to be saved, which is to be as righteous as God, is impossible. If my works could not save me, why should I think my works would keep me saved? It is impossible. But with God—all things are possible. That's the fight of faith, to believe that God can and will keep me righteous in His sight through the merit of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.