

"Justified by Grace"

Romans 1:16-17, 3:22b-31

1 June 2008

The Rev. Todd R. Goddard, pastor

[Zion West Walworth United Methodist Church](#)

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For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, "The one who is righteous will live by faith." the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus. Then what becomes of boasting? It is excluded. By what law? By that of works? No, but by the law of faith. For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one; and he will justify the circumcised on the ground of faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

Prayer.

1. For the next 16 weeks the sermon will focus on the book of Romans.
 - a. One of the seven undisputed letters of Paul
 - b. Focus: the Gospel of the justification and salvation of Jew and Gentile alike, by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ
 - c. Reveals the love and faithfulness of God
2. Our text for today: The Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ
 - a. Demonstrates the almighty, immortal, indivisible power of God
 - b. Reveals God's motive: salvation for everyone who has faith
 - c. Tells us that God is faithful to us, even as we are called to be faithful to God
3. Fact: Christ comes for all
 - a. Jew and Gentile
 - b. All are equally imperfect
 - c. All are justified by faith through Christ
4. Justification is a gift of grace
 - a. Made through the redemption and atoning sacrifice of Christ
 - i. Simply put: Christ died for our sins
 - ii. Like the sacrificial lamb took on the sins of the world, so too does

Jesus

- iii. His sacrifice was his gift for you and me
 - b. Purpose: to show God's righteousness
 - i. God will pass over the sins of those who have faith
5. A person is justified by faith
- a. Apart from works prescribed by the law
 - b. If we were justified by our works we would all burn in hell, for we are all imperfect
 - c. Therefore, we must be justified by faith, for it is the only means of salvation for an imperfect humanity
 - d. Our justification is God's gift of grace
6. NY Lottery Commercial: a small person named "A Little Bit of Luck"
- a. Luck is the antithesis of grace
 - b. We use the word luck to describe the statistical distribution of the few, and a hardened coldness to the majority
 - i. For example, one-thousand people get a new, experimental drug for their heart disease
 - ii. 999 die within the week
 - iii. To whom do you expect the health reporter for the evening news is going to go to for a testimonial?
 - iv. 999 families sit home, watching the one attribute success to luck
 - c. We use the word luck to describe that which we fear to publicly acknowledge: the grace of God
 - d. To attribute good outcomes to the grace of God, and not to luck, reveals that we are people of faith
 - e. Do we just want to fit into a crowd?
 - f. Or do we not want to stand for what we believe?
7. During Holy Communion this day, I want you to reconsider all the occasions in your life that you have used the word luck to describe these events to others. Take out the word luck. Replace it with the grace of God.
- a. For example: It was not luck that saved my life when I was hit by a car at the age of three. It was by the grace of God that my life was spared.
 - b. For example: It was not luck that had the bishop assign me to Zion, it was by the grace of God.
 - c. For example: It was not luck that brought Cynthia and I together, it was by the grace of God that we were married, and by that sustaining grace, we have built a family with two wonderful sons.
 - d. For example: It will not be by luck that I get to heaven one day, neither will it be because of the good things I've done. The only way I will get to heaven will be because of the grace of God.
8. How about you? What gifts has God already given you? What gifts are yet to come? These are the questions to ponder this day even as you receive the bread and the cup.

Amen.

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