

## **The Wednesday Word, April 12, 2017: Abounding, Astounding Grace!**

*“Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:” Romans 3:24*

When we are said to be justified, it doesn't mean we have been made righteous, it means we have been declared righteous. Even though we are sinners, the all-holy and righteous God has given us righteous standing before Him. This is astonishing! The very righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ is reckoned to us, and it is in this imputed righteousness alone that we are safe to approach the all-holy One.

We are justified and according to our text, FREELY so. To be freely justified means not only are we acquitted, but also this verdict of acquittal is not because of any reason in us. It is free. Lenski, the Lutheran commentator, calls this aspect of salvation pure, abounding, astounding grace.

The legally binding verdict of the all-knowing Judge is that we are not guilty. It is worth pausing and thinking about that. What a profound truth... May it liberate our hearts and free us from condemnation!

Zinzendorf said it well:

“Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness  
My beauty are, my glorious dress;  
'Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,  
With joy shall I lift up my head.

Bold shall I stand in Thy great day;  
For who aught to my charge shall lay?  
Fully absolved through these I am  
From sin and fear, from guilt and shame.

When from the dust of death I rise  
To claim my mansion in the skies,  
Ev'n then this shall be all my plea,  
Jesus has lived, and died, for me.”

We are justified freely by grace. It has often been said that justification can be summed up with the phrase, “Just as if I'd never sinned.” It does indeed mean that, but it means much more. It means, “Just as if I had lived the same life as Jesus lived!” When we are justified, we have the very life of Christ imputed to us. When justified, we are much more than pardoned. When a person is pardoned, their punishment is remitted, but the grounds for their condemnation are not removed. This is far from Justification.

Sometimes, I am accused of making too much of the distinction of the basis of Justification being righteousness imputed to us and not infused into us. “It's all semantics,” my critics say, “You are too technical.” This kind of comment, however, puts me in memory of the story of the

man who sought some advice from a governmental agency about using a particular chemical in his business. The agency wrote back, but the letter was couched in such technical language that he couldn't understand it. So he assumed it was alright to use the chemical and he wrote back thanking the agency for informing him and that he would go ahead and use it. When the department saw his letter, they, realizing what had happened, wrote back immediately and said just these simple words, "Don't use that chemical, it will rust the heck out of your pipes."

The man got the message!

Likewise, we need to be clear on the message that Gospel Justification has nothing to do with righteousness being infused into us. Great spiritual harm has come when people are not clear that we have been acquitted, not because of any reason in us but because salvation has been accomplished outside of us, in history, by Grace Alone.

And that's the Gospel Truth!