

Just As If I Never Sinned

REVIEW: We are still in our series taking a long look at salvation. Our look has been longer than I expected because of Easter, and my absence for youth trips, vacation, and the mission trip.

If you recall, two weeks ago we ended at the idea of justification. We worked through the difficult doctrines of foreknowledge and predestination. And if you are back this week, it means you either are agreeing to disagree with me, or I must not have freaked you out too badly. Both are good things.

INTRO: Today I want us to pick up where we left off in talking about justification, which will lead directly into another doctrine that enhances and puts a warm, friendly face on the doctrine of justification - the doctrine of adoption.

I probably do not have to tell you that life is busy. Many of us are still trying to figure out if we are coming or going. If I asked most of us in this room, you can probably list off 25 things you need to do this week just for yourself, or your job. Then if you have kids, add another 20 things - per child, and we are now getting close to understanding how busy life gets.

The problem comes when we treat our faith, and more importantly, our Savior, Jesus, like one of the many other things we have to manage. He is just an add-on in our lives and we can fit Him in between our son's baseball game and our yoga class. Rather than Jesus ruling everything in our lives, He takes a back seat to everything in our lives, and we manage Him like we manage everything else. That, however, is not how a relationship with God works!

"If your version of Christianity is that Christ is an add on to other things, and has not affected how you live your life, and how you see things, than you are your own god, under the false banner of Christianity." - Matt Chandler

That might seem harsh, but relationship with God was designed to transform, and I would NOT be doing my job if I did not get in your face and warn you.

Romans 8:28-30

I. Justification

A. The thing is we love justice in America

1. Two reasons I know this - First - we love legal shows on TV
 - a) Can anyone tell me how many CSI, and various others versions have been on TV in the past 5 years
 - b) You have various cities to pick from, you can turn to the military version, one of those was not enough so they started a second on the other coast

Just As If I Never Sinned

- c) And we used to have one “Law and Order” and how many spin offs have there been of that!
- d) We love justice - we love to see the bad guy pay for it in the end
- 2. The second reason I know we love justice - because the second someone points out something that might be wrong in us, or our conscience is talking to us, we bust our our inner lawyer
 - a) Man, we can justify just about anything
 - b) Well that’s not wrong because...or It’s not THAT big of a deal...or but you don’t understand, if you were in my shoes you’d do the same thing
- 3. This is how I know we love justice
- B. Justification means that you have been declared innocent
 - 1. But how can that be
 - 2. All of us have to know we are guilty - at least of something
 - 3. How does God declare us innocent
 - a) Did He miss something
 - b) Was His back turned ever so briefly and we got away with stuff?
- C. When we think of justification we usually go back to the law
 - 1. The problem is the law cannot justify us
 - a) The law was a means of justification - in a sense
 - (1) If you could keep the law perfectly, you are justified
 - b) What the law should have done is teach us that we can’t keep the law perfectly - we can’t be justified
 - 2. Galatians 2:15-16 “We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.”
 - a) This verse is a chiasm
 - b) That means it states the first point, the second point, then the second point again, and then back to the first point
 - c) He says it this way to highlight the truth
 - 3. Justification is NOT based on our behavior, but on faith in Christ
 - a) Yet so many people struggle with this
 - b) “I have to do something to be justified”
 - (1) Yes you do - surrender your pride and submit to God’s way
- D. Remember that this is the good news
 - 1. We had no way to justify ourselves
 - 2. But God made a way for us to be justified
 - a) Christ lived the perfect life that we could not

Just As If I Never Sinned

- b) His righteousness was imputed to you (set to your account)
- c) God's wrath was absorbed in Christ, and we were given His righteousness
- 3. Martin Luther said it this way, "If the article of justification is once lost, then all true Christian doctrine is lost."
 - a) That is how imperative justification is - because it is Christ who justifies
- E. So this courtroom drama goes as follows
 - 1. God, the judge, determines if the wrath that is set to fall on you will be carried out
 - 2. Through faith in Christ, His death, His blood, His resurrection, you have the righteousness of Christ, as Christ, your lawyer stands by your side
 - 3. The gavel bangs down and you are declared...innocent
 - 4. So we get excited, we hug our lawyer now that we have been declared innocent, and as we walk out of the courtroom we wonder how will I stay innocent - Just because the Judge says I'm innocent doesn't mean that I don't still do foolish things
 - a) And what this can often lead to is us trying to earn our title of innocence
 - b) That is a different form of slavery - rather than slavery to sin, it is a slavery to a works righteousness
- F. This is where the next idea that we want to look at today comes in
 - 1. Justification says that you have a just Judge that will do the right thing
 - 2. But we also have a loving Father that adopts us - that is our second doctrine - adoption
- II. Adoption - Romans 8:15ff
 - A. I have a video testimony I want you to watch of a young brother and sister singing group called LaRue
 - B. Did you hear him in particular - he was struggling a little bit with identity
 - 1. He knew he was a Christian, had no doubts, but felt like others were now looking to him in his new role in the spotlight
 - 2. He knew he didn't have it all together, but was tempted to act like he did
 - 3. He eventually realized that it is okay to struggle, and okay to share those struggles
 - 4. What that is, is an identity crisis of sorts
 - C. I think many of us struggle with this because what God did for us was so amazing - that He would declare us innocent even when we struggle to live that way - but this should help
 - D. Justification and adoption happen at the exact same time

Just As If I Never Sinned

1. God does not declare you innocent in justification and then wait for you to really behave innocently and then thinks, “Now he’s ready, now I’ll adopt him.”
 2. When God justifies you through faith in Jesus Christ, you are also adopted into the family
- E. I think there are many people that struggle with this idea because we get being declare right, and innocent, but our understanding that we are adopted seems to creep in more slowly than our understanding of justification
1. So let me be honest with you here
 2. I have no problem seeing that I have been forgiven
 - a) I understand the cross, I understand why it was necessary, I get that I am a moron that can’t seem to keep my affections set on God
 - b) I understand forgiveness
 3. What I have a hard time with is accepting the fact that God enjoys me
 - a) That He not only loves me, but that He likes me
 - b) He willingly wants to hang out with me in all my moronness (for lack of a better term)
 - c) It’s not some future cleaned up version of myself that God likes, it is that He likes me as I am, flawed and imperfect, but forgiven and free at this moment
 4. You all know I am a single pastor and I have no kids - which if you’re going to be a single pastor you best not be having any kids
 - a) So the youth group are in many ways “my kids”
 - b) And I love my kids
 - (1) I enjoy spending time with them
 - (2) No matter how weird they are
 - c) And how much more you parents enjoy spending time with your children
 - (1) Think about the flood of emotions when the doctor handed you your baby
 - (a) Most of you were probably blown away that you could care and love some little person so much
 - (b) That may have been the day you first realized how ready you are to kill if anyone messes with your kid
 - (2) Why did you love them?
 - (a) Because they did nice things for you?
 - (b) Because they were great conversationalists?
 - (c) Because of who or what they would become?
 - (d) Or was it just because they were yours and you delighted in them

Just As If I Never Sinned

- (3) Even after they are grown when they come back to visit, you love to spend that time with them
- d) You are getting a picture of God and how He loves to spend time with those that He has justified and adopted into His family
- 5. It can be hard to accept that God likes us this much, but that is what the Bible says - turn to Romans 8:15
- F. Before I go into this, I want to make certain we are clear on one concept that is a lie that has become popular
 - 1. Not everyone is God's child - God is NOT everyone's Father
 - a) God is Father to those that have faith in Him
 - b) John 1:12 "Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God"
 - 2. Everyone IS God's creation - God is Creator of all
 - a) But only those who have believed in His name are His children
- G. So what happens when God adopts us - Romans 8:15-16
 - 1. First of all we have not received a Spirit that makes us slaves to fear
 - a) Instead we have spirit of adoption where we cry out "Abba Father"
 - b) When we have been justified and adopted we are no longer slaves to sin
 - (1) We now have the freedom to (1) say no to sin
 - (2) We used to be at it's mercy, but not anymore
 - 2. Jonathan Edwards: "When God sets his seal on a man's heart by his Spirit, there is some holy stamp, some image impressed, and left upon the heart by the Spirit, as by the seal upon the wax. And this holy stamp, or impressed image, exhibiting clear evidence to the conscience that the subject of it is the child of God, is the very thing which in Scripture is called the seal of the Spirit, and the witness or evidence of the Spirit. And this mark stamped by the Spirit on God's children is his own image. That is the evidence by which they are known to be God's children; they have the image of their Father stamped upon their hearts by the Spirit of adoption."
 - a) So when we receive this Spirit of adoption, He has placed a seal on our heart (which now we are getting into a whole different doctrine), but that seal is the image of God restored in us
 - b) That is the evidence that we are His - we are His children, and we just got the biggest Daddy on the block
 - 3. But just because we have been justified and adopted, we are still tempted to sin - to find our own solutions to life's problems - usually this happens in one of a few ways - which one day we need to dig into these deeper

Just As If I Never Sinned

- a) We often believe that a better version of us is what we need to strive for and will make us happy
 - (1) Which only leads to setting up something other than God as who we worship
- b) If it wasn't a better version of ourselves that we were after, we looked to be validated by others
- c) Or maybe that the world is going to satisfy us
 - (1) The next latest and greatest, newer, shiner, brighter, bigger
 - (2) How many of you know that today's toys are tomorrow's rummage sale materials?
- d) Or, we wind up on the mouse house wheel called religion
 - (1) How many of you played on those as a child - the little house that spun around inside, and if you were really cool, you could put your hands and feet down and spin all the way around
 - (a) They would NEVER put that on a playground today
 - (2) But that wheel house of religion never satisfies
 - (a) We can never do enough to earn salvation
 - (b) We can never be good enough - we simply need to surrender to God's grace
- 4. The difference now is that instead of running back to these old behaviors, we are able to spot what we are doing, and repent of it
 - a) So when we think a better version of ourselves is the answer, we can spot that, repent, and turn back to God
 - b) When we look to others for validation, when we think the world will satisfy us, we can spot that, repent, and look to God for our identity and satisfaction
 - c) Perhaps the hardest to spot and repent of is religion
 - (1) Because it feels right
 - (2) But we have to ask ourselves the deeper question of, "what is my motivation for doing this?"
- H. So what happens in this adoption process is us learning to trust what is already true of us
 - 1. Christ gave us His righteousness by faith in His completed work on the cross
 - 2. It is learning to trust that what God has declared about you - that you are innocent and that you are His child are true
 - a) That you have full rights as God's child
 - b) That you are not just loved but liked by God

Just As If I Never Sinned

- I. Allow me to continue about this adoption before time runs out on us today - Romans 8:16 “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.”
 1. That is a curious phrase - “the Spirit testifies with our spirit”
 - a) It makes us ask the question, “How?”
 - b) How does God’s Spirit testify with our spirit - allow me to offer a suggestion or two
 2. The first way His Spirit testifies with our spirit is that we acknowledge the Lordship of Christ
 - a) Here’s where I dance on toes with impunity because I am just the messenger and this brings us back around to the beginning of the sermon
 - b) Christ is NOT an add on!!!
 - (1) Christ is Lord of ALL!
 - (2) This is something many, many Christians pay lip service to, but never really experience
 - c) When you live your life in such a way that the Lordship of Christ is not evident, you need to be asking if you are really God’s child
 - (1) That may sound harsh, but remember, this is Scripture speaking to us, not Pastor Keith
 - d) All choices display a pattern of being submitted to Him
 - (1) From the way you handle your money: what you purchase, how your purchase (not running up debt) how you handle possessions, what you tithe
 - (2) To the way you handle choices in life: praying over where to live, schooling your children, what kind of auto to buy and how long you drive it, when to have kids, how many to have, what job to take, how to behave at that job
 - (3) To the way you handle your schedule: (and this is where I lose SO MANY) your schedule is a reflection of your faith - and if Christ is an add on He is NOT the Lord of all - and for some of you that means repenting and changing some ways - for others that means some deep soul searching as to whether you really have become a Child of the King
 3. A second way that His Spirit testifies with our spirit: we desire to obey
 - a) Every one of you that just bristled at the thought of an area I just mentioned and came up with six excuses including, “Well if you lived my life Pastor you would understand” - thank you for giving me the perfect illustration

Just As If I Never Sinned

- b) If we are God's child, if we have been justified and adopted, we desire to obey - even if we live that obedience out imperfectly
 - (1) Understand that:
 - (2) A desire to obey means you are quick to review your life in light of God's Word
 - (3) A desire to obey means you are quick to repent
 - (4) A desire to obey does not mean that you will obey perfectly, but that we are always seeking His will, even if we screw it up
 - c) Put very plainly, if you have no desire to obey, you are kidding yourself that you are a Christian
4. All of this plays back into the title we skipped over for God - Abba Father
- a) It is widely preached that Abba means daddy
 - (1) Close - in rawest form it means father - but it is deeply intimate
 - (2) It carries the idea of a deeply loving, dependent relationship - much like this (VIDEO: Solider surprising kid)
 - b) This term of intimacy is called out joyously because of the depth of relationship
5. So to put this idea in context with all of Romans 8
- a) Who can separate us from the love of God - NO ONE
 - b) Who can make a charge against God's elect - NO ONE
 - c) It is God who justifies - and we are back to last week
 - d) In other words - when you understand that adoption is part of our justification, it plays out like this: 'The Judge - yeah, that's my dad. My dad lacks nothing - what do I have to be afraid! The judge is my Father!'

CONCLUSION: That are a couple of other things we will need to finish up next week regarding adoption before we push on the the next in line of salvation: sanctification.