

“Justified By His Grace”:
The Article Upon Which the Church Stands or Falls
Sermon Notes

- **Justification by *grace* alone through *faith* alone in *Christ* alone is a biblical doctrine we can’t afford to leave alone**

Last Week:

Like Paul before him, Martin Luther was eager to preach the gospel—and each one of us can be too (v.15)

**So what did Luther see? Luther saw that...*

1. We have grounds for boldness in the gospel (v.16a)
2. We have access to power in the gospel (v.16b)
3. We have hope for justification in the gospel (v.17)

**But what is justification? (Romans 4:4-5)*

“For in it the righteousness of God is revealed...” (v.17a) Romans 3:5, 21-22, 25-26; 5:15-17; 9:30-33; 10:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21

“...from faith for faith...” (v.17b) Philippians 3:7-9; Galatians 2:16; Luke 18:9-14

“...as it is written, ‘The righteous shall live by faith’.” (v.17c) Habakkuk 2:2-5

**And why is justification of such shattering importance for us?*

Next Week: Romans 8:12-17 - “From the Courtroom to the Family Room”:
The High Privilege of Spiritual Adoption
Orphan Sunday 2022

MEFC Community Group Study Guide

For the Week of November 6th - 12th

Getting Started

1. The MEFC 2025 Vision has three components: prayer, care, and share. How does the second component (“care”) relate to the other two? What would our church’s mission look like without it?

Digging Deeper

2. A common New Testament phrase for what we’re calling “care” is “good works”. Whenever we’re tempted to minimize the role of good works in the broader mission of the church, we are always wise to turn back to Paul’s letter to Titus. Consider the following passages in context: Titus 1:16; 2:7, 14; 3:1, 5, 8, 14. What key truths do we learn about the nature of good works and how they function relative to our mission to be and make disciples of Christ?

Another startling place where we see the priority of “good works” is in Revelation 19:8 where the gown of the bride (Christ’s church) is described at the wedding supper of the Lamb. Of what material is her dress made? What does it represent? What does this teach us about the importance of “righteous deeds” at the end of the age?

Open your Bible to Ephesians 2:8-10...

3. Though we’ve already seen evidence of the relationship of good works (gospel demonstration) to evangelism (gospel proclamation) in Titus 3:5-8, let’s look at it once more - this time in Ephesians 2:8-10. The word for “work” appears three times in these verses. What does Paul make sure we understand about our “works” in verses 8-9? What does Paul make sure we understand about good “works” in verse 10? What’s the problem with attempting to smuggle good works into verses 8 and 9? What’s the problem with imagining that good works are an optional component of verse 10? To which error are you more prone? Explain.
4. On a personal level, we have been highlighting various ways that we can care well for the folks on our ‘Lists of 5’. It boils down to the inner letters of the B.L.E.S.S. acronym (listen, eat, serve). Think about the people on your list. Do you have any recent examples of opportunities you’ve had to listen to them? Eat a meal, or have a cup of coffee together? Or perhaps serve them (or had them serve you) in any way? If so, please share with the group. If not, why not?
5. ‘Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime’. So the saying goes. Authors Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert have observed: “One of the biggest mistakes that North American churches make - by far - is in applying *relief* in situations in which *rehabilitation* or *development* is the appropriate intervention.”¹ How do you assess your personal approach to compassion and mercy ministry in light of this truth? Do you

¹ Emphasis mine, from Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor...and Yourself*. Zondervan: Grand Rapids, MI. 2009.

ever think you get these interventions (relief, rehabilitation, development) out of order?

Explain. How about as a church? Can you think of instances where we could probably stand to approach such opportunities with greater wisdom than we currently do? Explain.

6. Our EFCA Statement of Faith calls us to exhibit “compassion toward the poor”. Consider some of the biblical witness along these lines: Deuteronomy 15:11; Proverbs 14:21; 22:9; 28:27; Luke 16:19-31; James 1:27. Give what we’ve discussed so far, what are some concrete ways that we can live out this part of our creed with greater degrees of wisdom (Colossians 4:5) both individually and as a church family?
7. Our EFCA Statement of Faith also calls us to extend “justice to the oppressed”. Consider some of the biblical witness along these lines: Psalm 82:3-4; Proverbs 29:7; 31:8-9; Jeremiah 22:16; Isaiah 1:16-17. Given what we’ve discussed so far, what are some concrete ways that we can live out this part of our creed with greater degrees of wisdom (Colossians 4:5) both individually and as a church family?
8. Notwithstanding some encouraging steps toward this aspect of our 2025 Vision (the MEFC compassion ministry, the Harbor Center for Biblical Counseling, the MEFC adoption fund and annual Orphan Sunday emphasis, our pro-life involvement with New Life Family Services and annual Sanctity of Human Life Sunday emphasis), we do have quite a bit of road ahead of us as it relates to developing wise and robust ministries of care. Close your time together by dreaming up as well as praying for ways that we might continue to increasingly demonstrate the mercy of Christ as we seek to care for one another, the Westonka area, and beyond.