

Sixth Stage: Justified



Secure in God's Choice (Part 9)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, as we continue with our theme for this week, "Secure in God's Choice," a theme which can bring you into a new place of security in God.

I've been talking about the seven stages of God's total plan that bring us into the fullness of His salvation and His divine purpose. The initial stages were in eternity. Then the fourth stage, He emerged out of eternity into time, God called us. And when we responded aright to God's calling, He saved us. That's the fifth stage, salvation. I spoke about that yesterday. I said that salvation is from sin, from its guilt, its condemnation, its power, and its defilement. And it's a work of the Holy Spirit described by three successive phases: a washing or a cleansing, a regeneration or a rebirth, and a renewal or a new creation. And I said also that salvation is a transition in each life: from death to life, from darkness to light, and from being a child of wrath to becoming a child of God. That's the essence of salvation and it's based on meeting two simple requirements: believing in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, confessing with your mouth Jesus is Lord. That's what brings salvation. When we meet those conditions, we can say on the basis of the Bible we are saved.

Unfortunately, the experience and thinking of many Christians stops here, but God has two further stages. After salvation comes justification and then glorification. That's why it's so important to study and enter into to God's complete plan in all its stages. Otherwise you can end up incomplete, you don't complete your journey, you don't arrive at your appointed destination.

So in my talk today, I'm going to talk about the sixth stage: God justified us. Salvation leads to justification. Now, we need to understand what's meant by this word "justification." It's like that other word we encountered earlier: predestination. It's a kind of frightening theological word and people tend to back away from it. But it's a great pity to do that because it's really one of the most glorious truths of the New Testament, in fact of the whole Bible, is justification.

What does it mean to be justified? Well, there is a succession of meanings. It means, first of all, to be acquitted of a crime. It's heaven's verdict on your life, not guilty. It means to be reckoned righteous, God imputes righteousness to you. But it also means to be made righteous. Don't stop at just being

reckoned righteous, you have to be made righteous. My little explanation that I give many times of justified is this: I'm justified means "I'm just-as-if-I'd never sinned" because I've been made righteous with the righteousness of God which has never known sin, which has no shadow of guilt, which has no past to be forgiven. I'm made righteous with God's righteousness. That's what justification means.

It's the answer to a question that Job asked, perhaps the earliest book in the Bible, the Book of Job. Job was there in tremendous distress and he said this: "...how can a mortal be righteous before God?" That's a very deep, profound question. Job's friends, who really weren't much of a help to him, all seemed to take the line that no man can be righteous before God. It's ridiculous to talk that way, but thank God Job held on to that question, he didn't have the answer, but he wouldn't abandon the question.

Now, if you want to find the answer to that question in one book of the Bible, the book you need to go to is the epistle of Paul to the Romans. That's the answer in a complete form to the question, "How can a mortal be righteous before God?" Let me read from Romans 3:21-24. Notice here the emphasis on righteousness:

> "But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus." (NAS)

What profound words! You notice how we are justified, that is, reckoned righteous. It comes as a gift, we cannot earn it. It's by God's grace, it's not by our effort. And it's through the redemption which has been provided by the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on our behalf. Then Paul goes on a little further in Romans 5:1:

> "Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ..." (NAS)

Notice we receive this justification, this righteousness, from God as a gift by faith not by works, only by believing. If you try to earn it, you'll never get it. You have to believe. That's the problem of many religious people, they're trying to earn God's righteousness, it cannot be earned. And then in Romans 5:17, Paul compares the results of the sin of Adam with the righteousness of Christ and he says this:

> "For if by the transgression of the one [that's Adam], death reigned through the one [that's Adam], much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ." (NAS)

Notice, Paul speaks about receiving abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness. Again we see that righteousness is offered to us by God as a gift on the basis of salvation. When you are saved, God offers you righteousness as a gift. The basis for this is the exchange that took place when Jesus died on the cross. Jesus took the place of the sinner, the unrighteous, the ungodly. He bore the sinner's condemnation, He suffered the sinner's punishment. But the other side of that is the exchange which now God offers to us and this is stated very succinctly by Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:21. Speaking about Jesus, Paul says:

> "God made him [Jesus] who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (NIV)

You see the exchange? Jesus was made sin on the cross with our sinfulness. That's why He died, because the wages of sin is death, but the return is that when we believe in that and when we're saved through that, then on the other side we become, in Christ, the righteousness of God. Ponder that phrase, for a moment. If you are feeling troubled or guilty or insecure, just grasp by faith this fact that you, through faith in Jesus, have been made the righteousness of God. Consider what the righteousness of God is, the righteousness that's never sinned, has no guilt, has no dark shadows from the past. It's just total. Satan can tear your righteousness to pieces with his accusations, but there's nothing he can say against the righteousness of God.

There is, in the Old Testament, in the prophet Isaiah, a most beautiful picture of salvation plus justification. You see, I am emphasizing all along: Don't just stop at receiving salvation, realize you also received justification. This is the picture in Isaiah 61:10. It's a prophetic picture of what salvation will do for God's people. The prophet says:

> "I will rejoice greatly in the LORD, my soul will exult in my God."

That's real excitement. I question whether a person who never gets excited about salvation has much salvation. Maybe I wouldn't be the one to judge. But I find that in the

Bible people who knew what salvation was got excited about it. Isaiah says, "I will rejoice greatly in the LORD, My soul will exult in my God." Those are very strong words. Why?

> "For [God] has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness." (NAS)

Salvation is the first stage; righteousness the second stage. When God has given you the garment of salvation, don't refuse the robe of righteousness. Why shouldn't you have it? It's His righteousness. You can't earn it. It's a gift.

That's a most beautiful phrase there. "God has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness." He's covered me all over. There's nothing exposed of my old carnal sinful nature. There's nothing of my past left for the devil to fasten on. God has covered me all the way around from head to foot with a robe of His righteousness.

Now, righteousness is received as a gift but we can't leave it that way. Again, it requires a response from us. We have to work out what God has worked in. Paul says this very clearly in Philippians 2:12-13:

> "...work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure." (NIV)

So we work out what God has worked in. If we don't work it out, God can't work any more in. The measure of what God can work in is the measure of what we work out. But, if we work it out, God works it in.

And here's a picture of the final result in the picture of the Bride of Christ in Revelation 19:7-8:

> "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to [God], for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready. [His bride is the church.] And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints." (NAS)

You see, we've past there from imputed righteousness to outworked righteousness. We don't start with our righteous acts. We start with a righteousness that's imputed to us by God on the basis of our faith for salvation. After that we work out what God has worked in and it becomes the "righteous acts of the saints." And that will be our clothing throughout all eternity. Brother and sister, I hope you are really carrying through with those righteous acts because otherwise you will find yourself in an embarrassing situation in eternity.

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this same time. Tomorrow we'll move on to the seventh and final stage in God's plan, glorified. Be sure not to miss this wonderful climax.

My special offer this week is a book of recipes. Does that surprise you? Well, it's a book of recipes for success, proven recipes that have worked in my own life and in countless other lives. The title of the book is If You Want God's Best. All the recipes in it are practical and down-to-earth and they work. The title again: If You Want God's Best. Also my complete series of talks this week on "Secure in God's Choice, Part 2" is available in a single, carefully-edited cassette. Stay tuned for details.

Radio Program

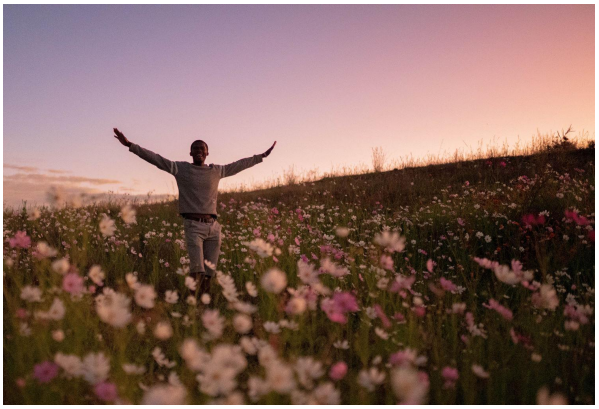
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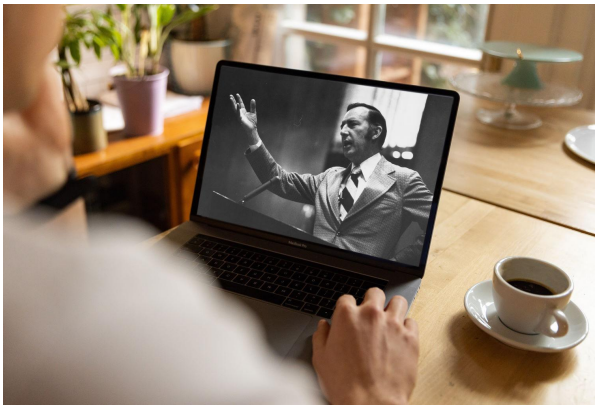
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