

Checking In

1. Take a few minutes to check in with everyone, see how they are doing, and open with prayer.

Learning

Knowing God

Key Doctrines

- *Christ* – Jesus’s life of obedience and his obedient death is counted by God as “righteousness,” i.e. a fully righteous human life.
- *Salvation* – Justification is to be “declared righteous” by God; and for the Christian the ground of our salvation is built on being declared righteous by God by having Christ’s obedient life “counted” to us, and our sin “counted” to him in his obedient death. We receive this justification by faith alone.

Key Observations

- *Read:* 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:22; Hebrews 10:1-18, Romans 5:18-21.
 - How do you see the New Testament authors describe Christ’s life in these passages? *Repeatedly throughout the New Testament Jesus is presented to us as the only human being who lived a sinless life as the fulfillment of God’s law (love of God, and love of neighbor). The law of God describes what a life of righteousness looks like in human terms, and no one fit that description or “fulfilled the law” until Christ (Matthew 5:17-18).*

- How do these passages relate Jesus’ sinless life to his sacrificial death? *What we see in these passages is that for Jesus’ sacrificial death to be sufficient and satisfy God’s righteous requirement, Jesus had to live a sinless life. The author of Hebrews in particular relates them intimately by stating that the blood of bulls and goats couldn’t take away sin but only that of a sacrifice of a human life who “came to do God’s will.” In other words Jesus’ sinless life was the necessary precondition to his sacrificial death. If he had sinned, his death could not have been sacrificial or sufficient to meet the requirements of God’s law.*
- How does the passage in 2 Corinthians 5 and Romans 5 relate Jesus’ sinless life and sacrificial death to us and our condition? *What these passages teach us is that Jesus’ sinless life and sacrificial death stand in for us as a representative life. Though not a perfect analogy, our congressmen and women “represent us” at a federal level. Similarly Adam and his life used to represent us to God, but now Christ and his life represents us before God. The life of Adam, as a representative human life before God, is under God’s condemnation. The life of Jesus, as a representative human life before God, is declared righteous by him. The question throughout the Bible, but especially here is, whose life do you want to represent you before God?*
- *Read:* Romans 4:1 – 5:2; Ephesians 2:8-9; Philippians 3:2-11; Luke 18:9-14.
 - How do these passages express the way in which we, as sinful human beings, are justified before God? *Persistently in these passages and many others, the New Testament communicates that our being counted as righteous before God is a gift of grace that comes to us by faith. That is, we are declared by God to be righteous not according to*

what we have done (our works), but by faith alone. telling us is that our “works” don’t contribute to our justification before God, i.e. our justification isn’t based on a combination of our good works and our faith in Christ, but is based entirely on our faith in Christ.

- What do these passages describe as the object of our faith; that is what are we to “believe in” for justification? *This is an important question to keep in mind, because we tend to think of faith as something we have a lot or a little of, or as something that we are strong in or weak in. But what the New Testament reminds us is that the “quality” of our faith isn’t what is important (e.g. faith the size of a mustard seed), but the “object” of our faith. Specifically it is our faith in Jesus’ sinless life, sacrificial death, and triumphant resurrection that matters. It is not how much we trust, but who we trust that matters.*
- How does the tax collector represent, in Jesus’ parable, the one who is justified by faith? *What we see in this beautiful little story is that the tax collector is not looking to himself (either to the quality of his faith, or to the substance of his good works) but to God for mercy. It is because of this that Jesus tells us that it is he who goes to his house “justified.” The Pharisee is consumed with himself, providing a list of his own good works and devotion (all the things he thinks make him righteous). One looks to God for justification, the other looks to himself. One trusts in God and his mercy, the other trusts in himself and his own righteousness. This is a story version of what Paul says in Philippians, contrasting the “righteousness of my own that*

comes from the law” and the “righteousness from God that depends on faith.” This is why faith alone is so important; faith alone looks to God, while some of our faith and some of our good works, turns our eyes back on ourselves and our own righteousness.

- What was anything additional that stood out to you about this week’s sermon on faith alone?

Listening

Responding to God

- In light of hearing this week’s sermon, our study together, and listening to God’s Word, how might God be inviting you to take a step of obedience?

Loving

Obedying God

- What is happening in my own life right now that I need to share and for which I need prayer?
- This week I am committed to praying for _____ about:

Checking Out

- What was most meaningful about this group session for you (*Give each person 1-2 sentences to share*)?
- Close in Prayer and Read Romans 5:1-2.