

*Redemption  
Accomplished  
and Applied*

*by John Murray*

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Thirteenth Lecture

Presented by Dr. Richard Spencer

# Review

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- We are discussing Redemption Applied
- Here is Murray's order of the events in the application of redemption:
  1. Effectual calling
  2. Regeneration
  3. Faith and Repentance
  4. Justification
  5. Adoption
  6. Sanctification
  7. Perseverance
  8. Union with Christ
  9. Glorification



*it is appointed for man to die once, and after  
that comes judgment*      Hebrews 9:27 (ESV)

# The Power of God

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- Paul wrote,

*I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”*

Romans 1:16-17

- The power is explained – a righteousness is revealed that is able to save us and which can be possessed by faith

# *What is Man's Biggest Problem?*

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- Man's biggest problem by far is that he is, by nature, an enemy of God and subject to his wrath

*The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness*

Romans 1:18

- Are you ready to die?

*If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?*

Psalm 130:3

# *Our Culture*

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- Our culture ignores God and tries to remove human responsibility
  - The medical model considers man to be an animal, with his behavior determined by genetics and environment
  - Guilt is thought of as a problem in itself, rather than as a proper reaction to having sinned
  - The idea of God judging us is laughed at, and yet people have a sense of its truth
  - The existence of an eternal hell is denied

# Our Culture

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- Murray notes,

*this is the reason why the gospel of justification is to such an extent a meaningless sound in the world and in the church of the twentieth century. We are not imbued with the profound sense of the reality of God, of his majesty and holiness. And sin, if reckoned with at all, is little more than a misfortune or maladjustment.*

RA&A, pg 117

# *Sin is Against God*

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- Murray also correctly points out,

*the essence of sin is to be against God. ... if we are against God then God is against us. It could not be otherwise. God cannot be indifferent to or complacent towards that which is the contradiction of himself.*

RA&A, pg 117

- The Bible says the same thing,

*we were God's enemies*

Romans 5:10



# What Hope Do We Have?

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- In Romans 3, Paul discusses the universal, radical nature of sin and concludes that *no one will be declared righteous in his [God's] sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.* Romans 3:20
- If we stand before God in his courtroom and are judged on our own merit, we are sure to be condemned, *because we are guilty sinners!*
- So, the real question is: How can a sinner ever be judged righteous by a holy and just God?

# *Justification and the Reformation*

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- Roman Catholicism teaches that baptism is the instrumental cause of first justification:
  - The person is cleansed of original sin
  - The grace of Christ's righteousness is infused
- A person must cooperate with this infused righteousness to become and stay truly righteous – this leads to entire RC system
- God only declares just those whom he analyzes and finds to be truly just (or righteous); this is analytical justification

# *Martin Luther as a Monk*

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- The idea that we must actually *be* righteous is what tormented Luther, he wrote

*Though I lived as a monk without reproach, I felt that I was a sinner before God with an extremely disturbed conscience. I could not believe that he was placated by my satisfaction. I did not love, yes, I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners, and secretly, if not blasphemously, certainly murmuring greatly, I was angry with God ...*

Kurt Aland, *Four Reformers*, Augsburg Publishing House, 1979, pg 23

# The Hope of the Gospel

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- After telling us that “*no one will be declared righteous in his [God’s] sight by observing the law*” Paul goes on in Romans 3 to explain the only way we can be declared just by God:

*But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.*

Romans 3:21-22

- Martin Luther referred to this righteousness from God as an “alien righteousness”

# *The Key: Justification*

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- Martin Luther called the doctrine of justification “the article upon which the church stands or falls”
- It was the material cause of the reformation
- The key word in the doctrine is *alone*; we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone
- Roman Catholics will agree that grace, faith, and Christ are all necessary for justification, but they will not agree that they alone are sufficient; merit must be added to grace

# The Biblical View

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- Murray states the view agreed to by both Lutheran and Reformed believers,

*Justification does not mean to make righteous, or good, or holy, or upright.* RA&A, pg 118

*In a word, justification is simply a declaration or pronouncement respecting the relation of the person to the law which he, the judge, is required to administer.* RA&A, pg 119

- Murray adduces three arguments to back up this forensic view of justification

# First Argument

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1. Scripture uses “justify” in a forensic way:

*When men have a dispute, they are to take it to court and the judges will decide the case, acquitting [justifying] the innocent and condemning the guilty.* Deut 25:1

*Acquitting [justifying] the guilty and condemning the innocent— the LORD detests them both.*

Prov 17:15

*All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus' words, acknowledged that God's way was right [justified God], because they had been baptized by John.* Luke 7:29

# *Second and Third Arguments:*

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2. In the Bible, “to justify” is contrasted with “to condemn”, which never means to make wicked (see Deut 25;1 & Prov 17:15 again)

*Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns?*

Romans 8:33-34

3. We see in these verses that to justify (or condemn) refers to a just judgment, not an act of changing the person



# Justification Defined

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- Murray concludes from the Scriptures,

*The meaning of the word “justify,” therefore, ... is to declare to be righteous. Its meaning is entirely removed from the thought of making upright or holy or good or righteous.*

*This is what is meant when we insist that justification is forensic. It has to do with a judgment given ... Regeneration is an act of God in us; justification is a judgment of God with respect to us.*

RA&A, pg 121

# *The Importance Stated*

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- Murray also reminds us of the importance of this doctrine

*If justification is confused with regeneration or sanctification, then the door is opened for the perversion of the gospel at its centre. Justification is still the article of the standing or falling Church.*

RA&A, pg 121

# The Central Question

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- But, now we get to the central question in the doctrine of justification; How can God, who is just and holy, declare guilty sinners to be just?
- If a human judge were to do this, it would be sin (Prov 17:15)
- But we cannot deny that God does this:  
*to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.*

Romans 4:5

# How Does God Resolve the Dilemma?

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- Murray states,

*It is here that the mere notion of declaring to be righteous is seen to be inadequate of itself to express the fullness of what is involved in God's justification of the ungodly. Much more is entailed than our English expression "declare to be righteous" denotes.*

RA&A, pg 122

- What does the Bible say about this? This is the main burden of the apostle Paul in Romans 1-5

# What Does the Bible Say?

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*The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. ... just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous. Romans 5:16, 18-19*

- The same Greek verb (*καθίστημι*) is used twice; we were in Adam, now we are in Christ – a legal declaration based on representation

# *God's Judgment is True and Just*

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- So, while justification does not make us truly righteous *in ourselves*, it is a true and just judgment
  - We are no longer in Adam
  - We are in Christ (i.e., united to Christ by faith); he took our sins and paid the penalty they deserved and we receive his righteousness

*God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, ... so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.*

Romans 3:25-26

# What Does the Bible Say?

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*God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. ... God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

2 Corinthians 5:19, 21

- This is the so-called “double imputation”
- Murray says

*Justification is therefore a constitutive act whereby the righteousness of Christ is imputed to our account and we are accordingly accepted as righteous in God's sight.*

RA&A, pg 124

# What Does the Bible Say?

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- Imputation is also taught in the Old Testament

*in the LORD all the descendants of Israel will be found righteous and will exult.*                      Isaiah 45:24-25

*I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.*                      Isaiah 61:10

- You can also look at Zechariah 3; Joshua's "clothes" are changed



# *The Ground of our Justification*

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- We are justified on the basis of the righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed to us

*The obedience of Christ must therefore be regarded as the ground of justification.* RA&A, pg 125

- Faith is the *instrumental cause* of our justification, in the Bible we are justified *by* faith, or *through* faith, or *upon* faith; but never *because of* or *on account of* faith

# *The Ground of Our Justification*

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- Murray adduces three arguments to prove that the ground of our justification is the righteousness of Christ
  1. Even if we were made absolutely righteous, we would still have to atone for our past sins, which we cannot do
  2. The Bible says we are not saved by our works (e.g., Gal 2:16); so even if we were made able to perfectly keep the law, our obedience cannot be the ground of our salvation
  3. We are saved by grace (i.e., a gift), e.g., Rom 5:15-21, Eph 2:8-9

# *The Ground of Our Justification*

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- We must look elsewhere for the ground of our justification;

*But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known ... This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe*

Romans 3:21-22

- This was foreshadowed in the Old Testament

*Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, he lived.*

Num 21:9

# *Where Should We Look?*

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- Murray shows us where the Bible says we should look for our justification
  1. We should look to Christ; it is in Christ that we are justified: Acts 13:38-39, Rom 8:1, 1 Cor 6:11
  2. We should look, specifically, to Christ's sacrificial and redemptive work:  
Rom 3:24, 5:9, 8:33-34
  3. We should look to the righteousness of God, it is by it we are justified: Rom 1:17, 3:21-22
  4. We should look to nothing less than the perfect righteousness and obedience of Christ:  
Rom 5:17-19

# *The Righteousness of Christ*

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- Murray makes the point that the righteousness we need cannot be our own

*the commanding insistence of the Scripture is that in justification it is the righteousness of God which is revealed from faith to faith, and therefore a righteousness which is contrasted not only with human unrighteousness but with human righteousness.*

RA&A, pg 127

- Murray explains elsewhere why this is so ...

# *Why a Divine Righteousness?*

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- Murray writes,

*A human righteousness, however high in attainment, or however perfect it might be in character, could never measure up to the demands of the situation which God's justification of the ungodly contemplates. Herein lies the iniquity of every doctrine, Pelagian, Romish, Arminian, or Liberal, which conceives of human righteousness ... as constituting or contributing to the justifying righteousness.*

# *Why Are We Justified by Faith?*

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- God has decreed that faith is the instrument to unite us to Christ – that should be enough
- But, there are reasons why this is the means:
  1. It is consonant with grace that it be so (Rom 11:6)
  2. Faith is congruous with the fact that the ground of justification is the righteousness of Christ:

*The specific quality of faith is that it receives and rests upon another, in this case Christ and his righteousness.* RA&A, pg 130
  3. Faith alone exemplifies the freeness of the gospel; faith stands in antithesis to works: Gal 5:4

# *Not a Faith That is Alone*

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- Justification is by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone
- Murray writes,

*No one has entrusted himself to Christ for deliverance from the guilt of sin who has not also entrusted himself to him for deliverance from the power of sin.*

RA&A, pg 131



# *What Does the Bible Say?*

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*For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.* Gal 5:6

*faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. ... You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless?* James 2:17, 20

# *What Does the Bible Say?*

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- The gospel of grace has been assailed as leaving the door open for licentious living, but the apostle Paul answered this objection:

*What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?* Rom 6:1-2

- Real faith is the expression of a regenerated person and so that person's behavior will also be changed

# *By Grace Alone*

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- Speaking of Paul's having to answer this objection, Charles Hodge wrote:

*Had Paul taught that men are justified for their good moral works as the Pelagians and Rationalists say; or for their evangelical obedience as the Remonstrants say; or for their inherent righteousness and subsequent good works as the Romanists say, there would have been no reason for this formidable objection.*

Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol III, pg 140

# Conclusion

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- Charles Hodge sums it up well

*There is no one characteristic of the plan of salvation more deeply engraven on the hearts of Christians, which more effectually determines their inward spiritual life, which so much pervades their prayers and praises, or which is so directly the foundation of their hopes, as the sacrificial nature of the death of Christ.*

Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. III, pg 159

# Application

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- Does the Hodge quote describe you?
- We must work to cultivate the life of God in our souls

*I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.*

Ephesians 1:17-19

# *To Prepare for Next Session*

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- You should read Chapter 6 of Part II (on Adoption)