

THE GOSPEL OF SALVATION

By The Rev. BILLY GRAHAM

*The substance of an address given at the Harringay Arena during the
Greater London Crusade*

I WANT you to turn with me tonight to the eighteenth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel, beginning at the tenth verse. "Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican." This well known story will serve to introduce my theme for to-night, which is that of Justification.

The story concerns a Pharisee and a publican. Now a publican was a tax gatherer. That means that he was probably a dishonest person; he was almost looked upon by the Jews as a criminal, and he was intensely hated. Now you here in England love your tax collectors, I am sure; but in those days they were not liked at all!

"The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself—God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican." Perhaps there are a lot of people in this building praying that sort of prayer to-night. You are saying, in effect, "O God, I am a member of the church. I live a decent and moral life. I thank Thee that I do not commit immorality or get drunk, and that I am probably a good deal better than the man sitting next to me."

Now look at the publican. "And the publican standing afar off would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God, be merciful to me a sinner." This man did not pretend to have lived a good life. He was probably guilty of all the sins which the Pharisee had mentioned. He had failed God—and he knew it. He openly confessed it and acknowledged it. So deeply did he

feel his unworthiness that he did not even dare to look towards heaven. He humbled himself before God.

Now here is the comment that Jesus made about these two men. Jesus said: "I tell you that this man (the publican) went down to his house justified rather than the other." How strange that Jesus should make a comment like that! What did He have in mind? Here was a Pharisee who had lived a good life and committed no grave sins: who went to church every Sabbath, fasted twice a week, and gave a tenth of his income to the Lord. And yet Jesus said this man was not justified. On the other hand here is this publican, a sinful and wicked man, and Jesus says he went away from the temple justified.

"Well," you say, "Billy, I am confused. I don't understand it. Whatever did Jesus mean? Why did He say the sinful publican was justified and the respectable Pharisee was not justified?"

The Nature of God

First of all, let us see what it means to be justified; and in order to discover that we have to begin by thinking about the nature of God. The Bible says that one of God's attributes, along with His mercy and grace and love, is His justice. "Just and right is He" (Deut. 32. 4). "Justice and judgment are the habitation of Thy throne" (Psalm 89. 14). Now in everyday language justice means to give a person his due. This is what happens in a court of law in England. The judge, on the evidence presented, gives to

the man who has broken the law the sentence which is due to him.

God is our Judge, and the Bible says that He is an *impartial* judge. "Shall He not render to every man according to his works?" (Proverbs 24. 12). God not only judges your acts; He judges the cause as well as the effect. He judges the motives behind everything you do, every word you speak, and every thought you think. He penetrates to the depths of your soul. God does not judge by hearsay. God will never judge any man unless He has complete evidence against that man. And the Bible teaches this solemn truth, that in the day of judgment your very conscience will testify against you. Even this sermon to which you are listening to-night will be part of the evidence which God will bring against you. You have heard the Gospel and you cannot plead ignorance. You cannot say, "Lord, I was not warned, I was never told."

"Well, Billy," you say, "if God is just, then why do all the wicked people seem to prosper in the world?" I could spend two sermons answering that question. I will just give you two or three reasons quickly. For one thing, wicked people are often instruments in God's hands to do God's work. Cyrus helped to build the walls of Jerusalem, and God allowed him to prosper in his sins. Then again, a nation like Britain or America may be spared because they shelter God's people. I believe that one reason why God has blessed your nation through the centuries, and is now in a measure blessing America, is because our two nations have protected the rights of men to proclaim the Gospel of Christ. And again, God allows wicked men to go on in their sin and to prosper in order that they may be rendered the more inexcusable. The very patience of God will be a witness against some of you at the judgment.

Now the Bible teaches that because God is pure and holy, His justice always explodes against sin. That is what the Bible means by the wrath of God. And the Bible says that all of us are sinners and have broken God's law. You are guilty. I am guilty. Everyone is guilty. We are all in the same boat, and the boat is sinking. Because we have broken the moral laws of God, we are condemned to death. "The wages of sin is death"; and that means spiritual death, the banishment of the soul from the presence of God for all eternity.

All are Guilty

Well, you say, what can I do? How can I receive justification? How can I be just before a holy God? This is the great question which has baffled the minds of philosophers all down the years. How can God be just and at the same time acquit a guilty sinner? And this is the question which God—let me say it with all reverence—has faced and answered in the Gospel of His Son. He has provided a way in which the blackest and guiltiest sinner can be reckoned righteous in His sight.

For justification means this: "just-as-if-I'd" never sinned. It means more than forgiveness, more than pardon, more than acquittal. It means that we stand before God as pure and righteous as Adam was before he sinned.

How can that be accomplished and God still remain just? It is a question to which all the wisdom of the angels could not find an answer. But I am glad to report to you to-night that God in His wonderful wisdom and mercy and love has found a way in which He can save us from everlasting death and cleanse us from our sins and take us to heaven to live with Him for ever—and *still* remain a just and holy God.

Oh, what a wonderful Lord we have! It is all His doing. We cannot do it

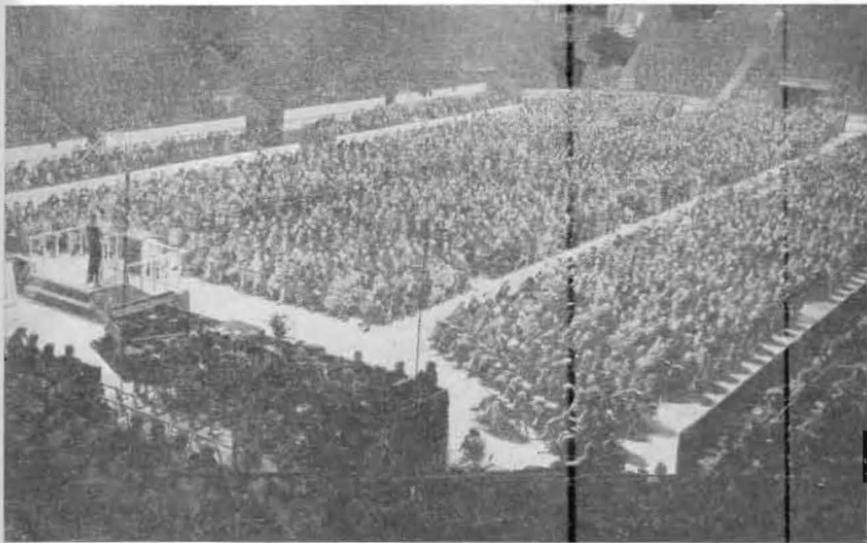
for ourselves by keeping the law. The Bible says, "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin." And the Bible says again, in Galatians 2. 16, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the deeds of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

The Bible says that you cannot work your way to salvation. There is no amount of money that you could pay which would purchase your forgiveness. There is nothing that you can do to save your soul. You may be a king on a throne. You may be the richest businessman in the city. But I tell you that there is no amount of influence or wealth which will make you acceptable to God. According to His own word, we are all guilty and condemned in His

sight. What, then, is our hope? What is God's answer to this problem?

I am glad to tell you that by the grace and mercy of God, while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ came into this world for the express purpose of going to the Cross in order that He might suffer the terrible condemnation which your sins and mine deserve. He suffered in our stead. He bare our sins in His body on the tree. And now God says to us, in effect, Believe on Him, receive Him, and thou shalt be justified.

We are justified freely by God's grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. We are justified by the righteousness provided by Christ Himself. You and I have no goodness of our own. There is nothing we can do. But God loves us, even in our sins; He loves us with an everlasting love; He loved us so much that He sent His only Son to bear our judgment,



Billy Graham preaching in the packed Arena at Harringay

our punishment, on the Cross of Calvary. The Bible says that "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Gal. 3. 13). Because Christ made satisfaction to God for our sins, God can now be just and in Christ He can pronounce you justified.

The Blood of Christ

I beg of you to remember that the ground of justification is the blood of Christ. You have got to meet God on His terms. What He is saying to you is this: If you want to be justified and have your sins put away, I will do it for you. I will meet with you. But there is only one place at which I can meet with you. That place is the Cross. There, and nowhere else, I will pardon your sins.

You say, "Well, Billy, don't you think there are many ways to heaven?" No, there is only one. Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh to the Father but by Me."

But you say, "How do I come to Christ? How do I get to the Cross?" Look at the publican in our story; what did he do? He humbled himself before God and said, "God be merciful to me a sinner." You, too, have got to humble yourself. You have got to deny self. You have got to turn from your sins and acknowledge that you have broken God's law. And then by faith you have got to receive Christ into your heart as Lord and Master and Saviour.

You can do that now, at this very moment. You can be justified tonight through faith in Christ. And if by faith you come to the Cross and take your stand for Christ, not only will you be justified: you will also be born again and become a partaker of God's life. The Spirit of God will make you a new person and you will

have joy and happiness such as you never dreamed existed. There will be a spring in your step and a joy in your soul and a thrill in your heart such as you never knew before. Christ will solve your problems and lift your burdens and make you a new creature. Oh, what a wonderful Saviour He will be to you!

How is all this done? It is done, I repeat, by *faith*. The Bible says, "Unto Him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Rom. 4. 5). And again: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5. 1). And yet again: "By Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13. 39).

You say, "Well, Billy, I still don't understand it." I confess that I do not understand it myself, but I know that it works. I humble myself before God and acknowledge that I am a sinner . . . I come to the Cross and by faith receive Christ as my Saviour. Then, by a supernatural act of God, I am born again. I am declared righteous in God's sight—as righteous as though I had never sinned. And God gives me His Holy Spirit to lead and direct and guide me the rest of the days of my life.

Not an Emotion

That is how it works. It is not an emotional experience. There may be tears of repentance, and thank God if there are; but there may not be. The thing that matters is that you should turn and bend your will to the will of God and take your stand by faith at the foot of the Cross and leave here tonight justified before God by His grace. It can happen to you right now.

I want to beg of you to give your

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heart and your life to Christ to-night. It is dangerous to delay. The soil of your heart may never be so fertile again. There may never come another time like this when the Spirit of God is speaking to you as He is now. There is a little voice down in your heart which says, "You had better settle it

to-night." That is the voice of the Spirit. I beg of you to obey that voice now, because God says, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." Come to Christ now. Receive Him as your Saviour. Be justified before God. Leave this place to-night a new creation in Christ Jesus.