

**The Book of Romans
Not Even One! (Part 1)**

Romans 3:9-20

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Well, after several weeks away from our study of the book of Romans, it is a joy this morning to come back. And today we come to a new paragraph, but it's a paragraph that is really a continuation of Paul's argument as he has laid it out in the first several chapters of this letter. So, let me just remind you of the flow of his argument so far. We've noted that his argument really doesn't begin until verse 18 of chapter 1 because initially, in the first 17 verses, we have a brief introduction to the letter, he mentions himself, the recipients of the letter, and gives some interaction with them about his plans to see them and his desire to see them.

After that brief introduction, Paul then begins the heart of this letter, and the first major section of the letter I've entitled, "The Gospel Explained, Justification by Faith Alone." This first section begins in verse 18 of chapter 1 and runs all the way through the end of chapter 4, "The Gospel Explained." Now, Paul doesn't actually get to the explanation of the gospel itself, the good news, as we refer to it, until chapter 3 verse 21. That's where he will begin that explanation of the heart of the gospel. And the heart of the gospel is justification by faith alone.

But before he can get to the positive side of the gospel he must first lay a foundation with the negative side of the gospel. Yes, the gospel has some bad news, because it's only that bad news that makes the rest of the gospel good news. And that foundation, that foundational understanding, is man's utter lack of personal righteousness. He builds this case beginning in chapter 1 verse 18 through chapter 3 verse 20. And he builds it in a successive degree, or I should say, a successive series of indictments.

He begins by indicting pagans in chapter 1 verse 18 to 32, most of chapter one, those who don't claim to know the God of the Bible. He indicts them for their sinfulness. They lack personal righteousness. They need the gospel. Secondly, beginning in chapter 2 verse 1 and running through chapter 3 verse 8, he indicts the Jews, and not just the Jews, but all who claim connection to the true God. And he says they too lack personal righteousness, they too need the gospel.

And then when we get to chapter 3 verse 9 to 20, the passage we just read together, he summarizes all of that, he condenses it to the reality that all humanity lacks personal righteousness. Every human being needs the gospel, the good news that he preaches. Now, in this last paragraph Paul summarizes and completes his universal indictment of all mankind. And

as part of this he also presents a body of evidence from the Old Testament to prove the sinfulness of everyone, that every person is under sin.

The picture that he draws here, that we just read together, is an accurate but frankly devastating portrait of fallen mankind. It is what theologians call depravity. Now, having said that word I immediately know that there's much confusion about what that word actually means. So, as we begin the study of this passage, let me tell you what depravity does not mean. It does not mean that people act as badly as they are by nature. None of us act, apart from grace, none of us act as badly as we actually are. Why is that? It's because of God's common grace. His common grace, that is, His grace that's common to all men, not saving grace, but the grace that works among all His creation, restrains evil among us.

How does it do that? Well, by an innate sense in our hearts, of sin, awareness of God, and awareness of coming judgment. As chapter 2 says, "The work of the law written in our hearts," rebukes our consciences and restrains our evil. Human authorities are part of what God uses in His common grace to restrain evil. Parents begin that process in the home. Curbing the wicked tendencies of their children, directing them to self-control. Human government, as he'll talk about in Romans 13, is another tool to restrain evil, to keep people from acting as badly as they are.

So, depravity does not mean that people act as badly as they innately or inherently are. It also does not mean that every sinner will indulge in every form a sin. Clearly that's not true. We have, as James describes it, "we are each tempted by our own lust," our own unique set of temptations. Although they're "common to man," they are unique to us. Depravity does not mean that people have no knowledge of God's Law nor a functioning conscience, they clearly do, and Paul's already dealt with that.

Depravity does not mean, and this is very important to understand, that sinful man doesn't admire those things that are good and virtuous. He does. Why? It's because of the residual image of God. He understands certain things to be good and virtuous because of that remnant, that marred image of God, that's stamped into every human life.

Depravity does not mean that believers don't actually perform actions that appear to be good and that even appear to be keeping of God's commands. Unbelievers do this. Unbelievers appear, at times, to be keeping the commands of God: respecting their parents, helping other people in need, and so forth. But those works, while they appear to us to be good, do not appear to be good to God. Here's how both the Westminster and the Baptist confessions describe it, "Works done by unregenerate men, although they may be things which God commands, and of good use both to themselves and others, yet because they proceed not from a heart purified by faith," (Remember, Paul says, "whatever isn't of faith is," what? "Sin.") "nor are they done in a right manner according to the Word of God, nor to a right end, the glory of God, they are therefore sinful and cannot please God."

So we look around and we see people do good things. Even things that are good by the standard of Scripture. But they're not good before God, because they're not done in faith, they're not done according to the Word, and they're not done for the glory of God. Depravity does not mean that every sinner is as depraved as he could possibly, ultimately become. Sadly, we see that lived out in some human lives as that depravity begins to grow in intensity and in expression.

So what does depravity mean? By depravity we mean this, the corruption, that's a good word, the corruption that we inherited from Adam through our parents, that corruption permeates every part of our nature, including every faculty and power of our souls and our bodies. In other words, depravity simply means this, sin is in every part of us. That's depravity.

Now, here in this passage we're going to study together we learn two things about depravity. We learn, first of all, that it is universal. That is, that it affects the entire human race without exception. And secondly, we're going to learn that it is total. By total, when we talk about total depravity, again, what we mean is that it affects every part of our person or the totality of our person.

Now let me show you, as we begin here, how Paul develops his thought in this paragraph and then we'll look at it together. First of all, in verse 9 there is the formal indictment of man's depravity, the formal indictment. He makes a legal accusation. And then in verses 10 to 18 he presents the biblical evidence for man's depravity, a string of Old Testament quotations from various passages, brought together as the evidence, the proof, of human depravity. And then finally, in verses 19 to 20 he deals with the legal implications of our depravity, the legal implications. And let me just summarize verses 19 and 20 for you. Essentially he says, because of our depravity all of us stand condemned before the bar of divine justice and we have absolutely nothing to offer in our defense, and there is no way for us to escape. Those are the legal implications of human depravity.

Now today, I want us to examine verse 9 and the formal indictment of man's depravity. This is the last paragraph before we get to the really good news. But it is only in understanding this that we appreciate the good news. Let's look at it together, the formal indictment of man's depravity. Now again, just to remind you, in verses 1 to 8 of this chapter, the section we studied last time when we were in Romans, Paul finished his indictment against the Jews by answering their objections to his gospel, a series of four Jewish objections to the gospel.

But at the end of verse 8 it is, as one writer describes it, as if a guillotine falls and makes an abrupt change. Because in verse 9 Paul steps back from his arguments against the Jews to summarize what he has argued in the first three chapters. Notice the unusual way he begins in verse 9, "What then? Are we better than they?" Now the question "What then?", as I said, doesn't refer merely back to the first eight verses of chapter 3, but it reaches all the way back to the beginning of his argument in chapter 1 verse 18. We could paraphrase it this way, so in light of the arguments I have made so far, what conclusion should we draw?

Now look at the next question. Literally, the Greek text says, “Are we better?” It’s one Greek word. “Are we better?” What is Paul talking about? Who is “we”? Whom is Paul discussing here? Well, there are two possible options and I need to give you both of them because they are both possible. First of all, it could be the Jews. Paul could be using “we” to refer to himself and his fellow Jews. If this is the correct option, and by the way some translations so much assume that it’s the correct option that they actually put it in the text. If you have the ESV, they add it. They say, “Are we Jews better?” The word Jews does not appear in the text, it simply says, “Are we better?” But this is an option.

If this is the correct option, Paul is saying something different than he said back in verse 1. You remember verse 1, he says, “What advantage does the Jew have?” And he said, there are a lot of spiritual advantages the Jews have. Number one being they have the Scripture. But when he gets to verse 9 he is saying, but those advantages only go so far. Jewish people, if he’s arguing here that the “we” is Jews, he’s saying that Jewish people are not inherently spiritually superior to Gentiles. Their innate spiritual condition is no better than a pagan. They too are guilty sinners before a holy God, just like the Gentiles. Now, I think this option is possible, that’s why I share it with you, but I don’t think that’s what Paul means when he says, “Are we better?” And let me give you a couple of reasons I don’t believe that’s what he means. By the way, that is the most common view; I should be honest with you and tell you that.

But let me tell you why I don’t think that’s what he’s saying. First of all, in this letter Paul often refers to Jews, but nowhere else in the entire letter does he associate himself with the Jews using the pronoun “we,” as he does, or appears to do, here, if that were true. Also, there are other uses of the verbs that have “we” included in them. You understand that Greek is an inflected language, so the pronoun “we” doesn’t occur in the text, it’s included in the verb as in other inflected languages, but there are others here. Notice verse 8, “we are slanderously reported as saying, ‘sin so that good may come.’” That “we” is clearly Paul and his fellow Christians. In the second half of verse 9 there’s another “we,” “for we have already charged.” That is clearly Paul. So understand then that it seems more natural for the pronoun “we” that’s sandwiched between those two not to refer to the Jews but to Paul and his fellow Christians.

If this is what Paul means, and I’m convinced it is, then we could paraphrase verse 9 like this:

What conclusion should you draw from what I’ve said so far? Am I somehow claiming that you, my fellow Christians, and I are somehow better by nature than everyone else that I’ve been condemning in the first two chapters? Am I claiming that Christians are, in and of ourselves, by nature, apart from grace, spiritually better than unsaved Jews and Gentiles?

Notice Paul’s answer in verse 9. “Are we better? Not at all.” This is an emphatic denial. Absolutely not.

Let me just stop here and make it clear that we understand this. If you're sitting here this morning and you're a Christian, you're a follower of Jesus Christ, you have repented of your sins and you put your faith in Him, it is not because of anything in you. You are no better, nor am I, than anyone who's not yet saved. It's not because God looked down and said, now there's an intelligent one, there's one I can use, there's a person who's a little better than the average person around him. He didn't say, I see, I look down the corridors of time and I see that he will believe, I'll choose him. No. Are we better? Absolutely not. We are Christians because of nothing in us but solely because of divine grace.

Now, Paul next explains why he cannot be teaching that Christians are better. Verse 9 says, "for," because, here's why that can't be what I'm saying, because, "we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin." He says, listen, we're no better because I've already shown you that all Jews and all Greeks are under sin. And that includes us. Now remarkably, here in verse 9 Paul provides us with his own summary of everything he has taught in the letter to the Romans so far, from chapter 1 verse 18 to here. Notice how he says it, "we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin." That's the point he's been making. And he makes it clear that that's the point he's been making.

Now look at what he says specifically. The Greek word translated charge, that's a legal word, it means, literally, to accuse beforehand, to charge with guilt before time. That is, before the time to actually find a person guilty. So this is a legal word for an indictment. So far there's no proof, there's no conviction, it's an indictment. I have indicted, is what he's saying. I have indicted both groups with sin. By the way, that's an important point to make because Paul doesn't claim here that he has already proven the guilt of all people. He's going to do that in just a minute with a string of Old Testament references. So far he has merely issued an indictment, a legal accusation, a formal accusation.

And notice who he's indicted. He says, I have accused the Jews of being guilty and the Greeks as well. In this context the word Greek is used of all non-Jewish people. So basically he's saying, all Jews and all non-Jews. What does that mean? Everybody. You are either Jewish or you're non-Jewish. It's everyone. All humanity. I have made a formal accusation already, Paul says, that all humanity is legally guilty before God. Guilty of what? Look at verse 9, "we have already charged that both are all under sin." Now, that is a momentous expression because it's the first time in Paul's letter to the Romans that he uses the word sin. He's talked a lot about our guilt, he's talked a lot about what causes God to be angry with sinners, but it's the first time he actually uses the word.

What is sin? The Greek word simply means to miss the mark. It's to fail to hit the target that God has set with His commands. That's sin. Let me give you a theological definition. "Sin," the catechism says, "is any transgression of, or lack of conformity to, the law of God." My wife's parents taught her the catechism when she was a child and, as we've taught our own

children, and she tells the story that when she was in, I think it was first grade, somewhere early in school, there was a new teacher that came in to the school and early in the school year asked the kids, “Alright kids, so tell me, what is sin?” You know, expecting the, sort of, typical first grade response. And my wife was eager to answer, you know, and held her hand up, call on me, call on me, and teacher calls on her and she stands up, and she says, “Sin is any transgression of, or lack of conformity, to the law of God.” That poor first grade teacher, she was thinking, “What have I gotten into?” But that’s exactly right, that’s what sin is.

But I want you to notice in verse 9 what Paul doesn’t say. He doesn’t say that we all sin, that we all commit sin, which is true, and he’s going to prove that very quickly here, he’s going to say it in other ways throughout the letter, but that’s not what he says here. Instead, notice he says, and you’ve got to put on your grammar hats here, works in both English and Greek, he says “we are.” What is are? Are is a verb of being. It’s a verb that speaks of a state of being or a condition. He says, we are in a state of being or a condition that can best be described as “under sin.” Now, that is absolutely crucial to get because when you and I think of sin we think of acts we commit. And those are issues. But our problem is greater than that. Our problem is, in the sight of God we are all in a state or condition of being “under sin.” That’s a remarkable indictment of all humanity.

Now what does that mean? It’s absolutely foundational to understand this because remember, this is Paul’s summary of everything he’s taught so far. And it also brings us to issues he’ll touch on in the future in this book, so we need to understand what this means. “Under sin” refers to several realities, several spiritual realities. Let me give them to you. First of all, to be “under sin” means to be in the realm of sin. All people belong to the kingdom where sin reigns.

You know, when we look at people and we evaluate them, what do we do? We evaluate them on a, sort of, sliding scale of goodness. We look at somebody and we say, a co-worker, a fellow student, a neighbor, a family member, and we say, you know, he’s a pretty good guy, or we say, you know, he’s not really a very good guy at all. We’re looking at relative states of goodness, a scale.

That’s not how God looks, at all. From God’s perspective, every person on this planet, and let me say it more personally, every person in this room, lives in one of two realms. You either live in the realm of the kingdom of Satan and sin reigns in your life, or you live in the kingdom of God’s Son and righteousness is at home in your life. That’s it. There’s no middle ground. There’s no Switzerland in the spiritual world. You’re in one or the other.

To use the language of Romans, you are either under Law or you are, by an act of God’s grace, under grace. That’s it. You’re under Law, you’re in the realm of Law and sin, those two go together, in fact, you see in verse 9 he says “under sin,” down in verse 19 he says, “under Law,” because they go together. If you’re under the Law you’re under sin too. Or, as he’s going to say in chapter 5 and chapter 6, you’re under grace. That’s it. This morning you are either still under

sin, you are still in the state in which you were born, or, by an act of divine mercy, you are under grace. There's no middle ground. All human beings, apart from divine intervention, live in the realm of sin, the kingdom of Satan, rather than the kingdom of God.

Secondly, "under sin" means under the practice of sin. This is the obvious one. All people routinely commit sins. You understand this. We do it in our thoughts. We do this in our attitudes. We do it in our words. We do it in our actions. This is his point in chapter 3 verse 10 and following. In fact, look at verse 12. He gets to our actions. "THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD." What that means is, that we all sin. And he goes on to describe sin in our speech in verses 13 and 14, sin in our relationships in verses 15 to 17, and in verse 18, sin in our relationship to God. We routinely commit sins. We are under the practice of sin. We are "under sin."

Thirdly, it means we are under the power of sin. This is something different. This is something more. All people, as a part of the nature with which they're born, are enslaved by sin. In fact, Paul draws two word pictures in Romans that draw this relationship and powerfully portray our relationship to sin. One of those word pictures is that of a ruthless despot, a ruthless king who is over us and we are his hapless and helpless subjects, and we just have to do what he says. The other picture is of a ruthless, abusive slave owner, and we are the slaves. Let me show you this. Turn over to Romans 5. I want you to see how he personifies sin. Sin is a power. Sin is a powerful influence. Look at chapter 5 verse 21. Here's that first picture. He says, before Christ, before the work of Christ, "sin reigned." Sin was like a ruthless despot ruling our lives.

You come to chapter 6 verse 6 and he comes to the other picture. He says, you know, those of us in Christ, this is no longer true of us, but notice the end of verse 6, "we are no longer slaves to sin," implying what? We once were. We were sin's slaves. Sin was like an abusive slave master and we its helpless slaves.

Look at chapter 6 verse 12, he goes back to the other image, "don't let sin reign." If you're in Christ that doesn't need to happen anymore. Don't let sin reign in your mortal body. Don't let it be that despot, that you obey it and obey its lusts. Look at verse 14. Again, this other image, "for sin shall not be your slave master." And here it is, I love this, here's what's happened, "you were under Law," or under sin, "but now, by divine grace, you are under grace." You've changed realms.

Look at verse 17. Here he has both the before and after.

But thanks be to God that though you were [*before Christ, before conversion, you were*] slaves of sin [*sin was your ruling master*], you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed [*the gospel*], and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

One more passage, look over at chapter 7 verse 11. Paul, here, is talking about his pre-conversion state. Notice how he personifies sin. He says “sin,” this is 7:11, “sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment not to covet, sin deceived me and through that commandment sin killed me.” You see the powerful word picture? Paul’s describing sin as this abusive slave owner. And listen, if you’re in Christ you understand that because that’s how you used to be. That’s what sin used to be like in your life. It told you what to do. No matter how many times you tried to break free. No matter how many times you made New Year’s resolutions. No matter how many times you tried to change yourself, you tried to modify your behavior, you kept coming back. Why? Because it was your master. It was a power in your life that you couldn’t break. It’s only in Christ, Paul says in Roman 6, that that power is broken.

This is exactly what Jesus said, isn’t it? You remember, in John 8 when the Jews said, we’ve never been enslaved to anyone, which, I think, is one of the most fascinating statements in the Bible, and Jesus says in John 8:34, “Truly, truly I say to you, whoever commits sin,” think about this now, “whoever commits sin is the slave of sin.” You commit sin, it becomes your master. You understand this experientially. You know, when, outside of Christ, we start flirting and playing with sin and we think, you know, we can just take it so far and stop. We think, you know, I’m only going to do this, it’s not going to get out of hand, I’m going to control it. But sin can’t be controlled like that, sin is a power. We are “under sin” outside of Christ. Sin presses us. It crushes us. It controls us. It dominates us. It enslaves us. Apart from the work of Jesus Christ, sin is our oppressive master and we are its slaves.

Not only does “under sin” mean in the realm of sin, under the practice of sin, under the power of sin, but, fourthly, also under the guilt of sin. All people are legally guilty of sinning against God. There is legal guilt. I’m not talking now about a subjective feeling. I’m not talking about you’re feeling guilty. I’m talking about real legal guilt. Go back to chapter 1 verse 32. Paul begins to deal with this issue here. He’s talking about the pagans here, and he says, “although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death,” he’s talking about legal guilt before the Law, “they not only do the same, but give hearty approval to those who practice them.”

But the same thing is true of the Jews, chapter 2 verse 1, “when you judge others you condemn yourself because you do the same things.” “Therefore,” verse 2, “the judgment of God is going to fall on you.” Verse 3, “you’re not going to escape God’s judgment.” Verse 5, “you’re storing up God’s wrath for the day of judgment.” We’re talking about legal guilt before God the judge and creator.

Go to chapter 3 verse 19. Here it’s all humanity. And he says, “Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law,” and therefore under sin, “so that every mouth may be closed.” That’s a fascinating legal expression. We’ll deal with it more when we get there, but it’s a legal term for not having a valid defense. Nothing to say. You get to the bar

of God's judgment, His justice, and you think you've got all these things you want to defend yourself with, and you just throw your hand over your mouth because there's nothing to say. No valid defense. Guilty. Every one of us, apart from the gospel, are legally guilty of having broken God's Law.

Number five, to be "under sin" also means to be under the penalty of sin. Not just guilty, but the sentence is coming. All people in the world have already been pronounced guilty by God and are simply awaiting the execution of the penalty. There's another expression down in verse 19 that communicates that. Notice that "all the world may become," literally, "legally liable to God." It implies the idea of guilt, a guilty verdict, and a sentence having been pronounced. The closest we can get is somebody living on death row. You know, they've already been found guilty, they've already been sentenced, they're just waiting for the verdict to be carried out. That's all humanity, under the penalty of sin. We are all "under sin" in those ways.

Folks, nothing makes more profoundly clear our need for the gospel than what Paul has said here. Our only hope is, instead of continuing to be "under sin," as we are by nature, is for God to intervene and for us to move into a different realm and be under grace. That's our only hope.

Now what conclusions should we reach from this summary of Paul's indictment here in chapter 3 verse 9? There are three of them, very quickly, three conclusions. Number one, no group of people is by nature, that is, apart from grace, spiritually superior to another. Paul says, in verse 9, "Are we better?" "Are we Christians, are we inherently better?" "Not at all." "Not at all." When it comes to sin, when it comes to being under sin, understand this, we are all on a level playing field. Now that's revolutionary, because most of us like to look around and say, well, you know, I'm not as good as that person, but I'm not as bad as that person. And Paul says, you've got to get that out of your mind. That doesn't even exist when it comes to God's perspective. We're all on a level playing field. We are all equally guilty, all equally condemned, all equally headed to judgment, in need of the gospel.

Number two, it means human sinfulness is truly universal. We see, notice the universal scope of sin in the sweeping, sort of, comprehensive language in this paragraph. Look at verse 9, "both Jews and Greeks are all under sin." Verse 12, "ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE." Verse 19, "all the world is accountable before God." Verse 20, "no flesh will be justified by the works of the Law."

But Paul isn't content to leave his indictment of human depravity at that sort of sweeping universal level. He also gets very personal and individual. Look at verse 10, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE." That is the Psalmist's and Paul's way to say, not you, not me, nobody. There's no exception. "NOT EVEN ONE." Verse 11, "THERE IS NOT ONE WHO UNDERSTANDS. THERE IS NOT ONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD." Verse 12, "THERE IS NOT ONE WHO DOES WHAT IS GOOD IN THE SIGHT OF GOD. NOT EVEN ONE." Verse 19, "Every mouth is closed."

This is very personal, very individual. Have you ever thought about you in those terms? It's what God says, not you, not me.

Lloyd-Jones writes, "The best man, the noblest, the most learned, the most philanthropic, the greatest idealist, the greatest thinker, there has never been a man who can stand up to the test of the Law. Drop your plumb-line and he's not true to it." All, universally, without a single exception, the good people, the very best and nicest people, as well as the worst and the most vile, are all under sin.

There's a third conclusion here, and that is, that man's greatest sin problem is a legal problem. Man's greatest sin problem is a legal problem. Now that's not how we normally think about our sin. We think about the problem with our specific sins and their control and how we've committed them again and again, but that's not how God looks at sin. Did you notice how Paul describes our problem with sin in legal terminology? If we go back to chapter 1 he talks about the ordinance of God and the death penalty. He talks about, in chapter 2, God as judge and a coming day of judgment before the judge, and God rendering to each person according to his deeds.

We get to this paragraph that we're studying together, and notice, he refers to God's Law, he refers to a legal indictment, to the absence of any legal defense, and to a guilty verdict. It's all legal terms, it's all courtroom language. Why is that important? Because it tells us that our problem with sin is primarily a legal problem before the judge of the universe. And that also means that the only solution to our problem is a legal solution. And that brings us to justification.

You see, the only way our problem with God, the righteous law-giver and judge, can be resolved is for God to make a legal decision. For God the righteous judge to take the righteousness that doesn't belong to us, that belongs to someone else, that belongs to His Son, and to credit that righteousness to us and to treat us before the Law as if we had lived that life of righteousness. That's our only hope. That's justification. That's the heart of the gospel.

There's only one other place that this expression in verse 9, "under sin," is used in Scripture verbatim. It's in Galatians 3:22. Listen to what Paul writes, "the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe." There's the gospel. That's our hope. Our problem is a legal problem. And our solution is a legal solution. It's called justification.

Let's pray together. Father, thank You for Your Word. O God, we're so grateful for how clear it makes our relationship to You, both our desperate need of what You have provided in the gospel and in Your Son, and what You have provided in the gospel and in Your Son.

Father, we bless You, those of us who are in Christ, we thank You that this is, by grace, what we used to be, that we are no longer under sin. But because we have put our faith in the work of Your Son we are under grace. Father, thank You. May we love You more. May we serve You better. May we follow Your Son with eager and willing hearts. May we tell others about this amazing legal transaction that's at the heart of the gospel, justification.

And Father, I pray for those here today who are still under sin, still practicing it to an increasing degree. Under its power. Enslaved by it. Under its guilt. And still sitting here today under its coming penalty. Father, may this be the day when they enter Your courtroom, and when they plead for the work of Jesus Christ to be applied to them. Lord, may this be the day of their salvation. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.