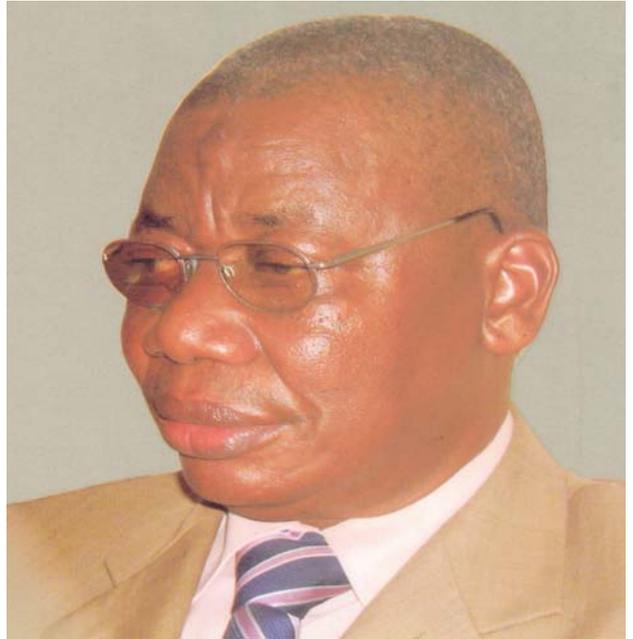


The Foundation of Our Hope

preached by Rev Paul Akazue
of August 12, 2003



We thank God for the opportunity to be present in "Faith City" for the first Bible teaching. It is God Who has done it. May He continue to be our God forever.

The title of our teaching this morning: "*The Foundation Of Our Hope*", dwells on Justification by Faith.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

"For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:16,17).

Here is the foundation of our hope and it is the beginning of justification by faith. If you come across the Gospel of Jesus Christ and you embrace it in its entirety, you will never be put to shame because God will give you 'power unto salvation'. God does not make one ashamed and He is the only One Who can lay a solid foundation for our faith.

God will forgive your sins, if you confess, forsake and believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross to redeem you. He will then give you power to go and sin no more. You will have to live by faith and not by sight, so that you can progress in that power from victory unto victory, unto eternity.

"For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith".

How do we exercise our faith? We exercise our faith by believing God and trusting in His Word. When God says a thing, you do it. That is the secret of walking with Him. Miracles follow obedience.

Do you remember what Mary told the people who were serving at the marriage in Cana of Galilee when they were short of wine? Mary told Jesus the problem and thereafter advised the servers, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it". Though Jesus had not started His public Ministry, He instructed the waiters to fill the pots with water and serve the guests. They never questioned the instruction but obeyed Him to the letter, and the miracle followed. The water became wine—fresh grape juice and not alcohol. The Governor of the feast exclaimed, 'What wonderful wine! Why did you keep this wine till now? You should have served this first'. The people too were amazed. Why did they experience that miracle? Because they believed. When you believe God, it means you have faith and when you exercise faith, God will count it to you for righteousness.

***"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;
"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:
"Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;
"To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Romans 3:23-26).***

All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Sin started in the Garden of Eden with our first parents. They sinned and all their offspring were born with the nature of sin. So, as the children grew up,

they found themselves committing sin. You cannot keep yourself from sin, except God helps you. If sin is in the life of any person, that person is dead spiritually and separated from God. God's hands are not shortened that He cannot save; His ears are not deaf that He cannot hear, but it is sin that separates man from God. God did not leave man in a hopeless and helpless situation. He worked out a way of redemption for him.

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus".

Christ Jesus was the Seed of the woman that was promised in Genesis 3:15. He was the Seed of the woman that would bruise the serpent's head, shed His precious Blood on the Cross at Calvary as the perfect Lamb of God, so that those who believe may be redeemed. God set Him forth as a propitiation for our sin. If we exercise faith in the Blood, which was shed for the remission of sin, we will be saved. Jesus declared in Matthew 26:28, **"This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins"**. On the Cross at Calvary He shed all His Blood. He paid the price. How do we know? When the soldiers wanted to hasten the death of the thieves hanging on the cross on either side of Jesus, they broke their legs, but turning to Jesus they saw He was already dead. Then one of them thrust a spear at His side, Blood came out, followed by water, showing that the Blood in His body had been shed completely for you and for me.

"He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).

At Calvary, something dreadful happened to Christ our Saviour. There was a crown of thorns placed on His head. How many of us can bear the prick of a pin? A sister testified of how God delivered her husband from a nail that pierced his foot. It was only on one foot and everybody was worried. But Christ had nails on His feet and hands and a crown of thorns on His head. Christ took our place, suffered and died that we might go free.

One of the thieves on the cross realising that Jesus was the Innocent One, rebuked the other for railing on Jesus Who was suffering wrongfully. He said unto Jesus, **"Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom"**. Immediately the answer came. **"To day shalt thou be with me in paradise"**, said Jesus. It was a marvel that a hell-bound thief realised that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, the Innocent One, the sinless One, the worthy Lamb of God. When the sinner realises that the Blood shed on the Cross of Calvary is able to wash away his sins, that is what we call faith; that is what we call belief. When you believe, it does not mean knocking on the bench or throwing yourself down, but believing in your heart and being convinced that the work is done.

Though you have sinned against God, He will forbear. Once you believe in the efficacy of the Blood of Jesus Christ, the Just and the Justifier of the unjust, He will save you. It is a mystery that in a moment of time, a hell-bound sinner becomes a Heaven-bound saint. It is the marvellous grace of God.

In summary, justification means to be vindicated, to be set free, guiltless, blameless, sinless, forgiven, righteous and worthy in a moment of time. When the work of salvation is wrought in your heart, you become acceptable to God. You are no longer repulsive to Him; you stand before Him guiltless and innocent.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

"Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2: 8, 9).

By grace you are saved through faith, not because of any good you have done, or any service you have rendered. Your work cannot atone, it cannot avail, it is not enough. What avails is just unmerited grace, the unmerited favour of God. If it were to be by wealth, only the rich would be saved; if it were by might, only the strong would be saved. But it is not of works, it is not by might, it is by grace, through the exercise of faith in the work that Jesus Christ did on the Cross of Calvary.

"For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.

"For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Romans 4:2, 3).

The call came to Abram: 'Abram, Abram, arise and go to a city I will show thee'. At that time he was not Abraham, he was Abram. It was rather difficult in those early days, to leave where he was familiar with, where he was well-known, to start a journey to the unknown. It could be that some friends of Abram or his relations might have asked him, 'Abram, where are you going?' He could have said, 'I don't know'. They would have felt that something was wrong with Abram. Abram, however, got his things together, took his wife and nephew and moved. He was to go to where he did not know! That was faith indeed! God counted it unto Abram for righteousness. I don't know what God will ask of you, if you obey, it will be counted unto you for righteousness.

Sometimes when you wish to answer God's call and give Him your service, you might wonder, 'What would my friends and relations say? What would I tell them?' This may hinder your giving a prompt answer to God. What do you want to do with your life of sin? If you do not leave sin, if you do not quit sin, sin will destroy you. If you are clinging to some sinful pleasures of the world, one day they will desert you and it will be too late to make amends.

"THEREFORE being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).

What can you compare with the peace of God? That wonderful gift from above, residing in the heart, makes you peaceful no matter what happens around you. That inward peace, that inner peace, which is indispensable, is the number one evidence of justification. You are no longer at loggerheads with God.

"Be ye reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:20).

When you get reconciled to God, you will be at peace with Him. If you have Jesus, you have no problem. Have Jesus, and you have every good thing.

"THERE is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1).

If somebody comes knocking at your door and there is no condemnation in your heart, you will answer boldly, 'Yes! can I help you?' But if there is condemnation in your heart, the knocking on your door by a little girl, who has come to deliver a message, may make you shiver. When there is no condemnation, you will enjoy spiritual liberty, you will enjoy spiritual freedom and you can rest in the arms of your Saviour.

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again" (John 3:3, 7).

Justification is also known as the *new* birth. When you are born again, new life starts in you. At the new birth, new life enters into your heart because Jesus, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, has come to dwell in your life and becomes the King in the kingdom of your heart. All things become new.

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Old things pass away, all things become new because Jesus Christ is in you. He becomes your Friend, your Saviour, your Protector, your Provider, your Counsellor and your all in all. Oh, it is wonderful!

***"LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?
"He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.
"He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.
"In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.
"He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved" (Psalm 15: 1 – 5).***

This short Psalm talks about the characteristics of people who are justified, who are born again and who are

qualified to dwell in Heaven with God. When you are justified and the Lord imputes His righteousness into you, your walk will be that of righteousness. You will speak the truth, you will not backbite, you will not take up a reproach against your neighbour, you will not look down on any man. You will honour and fear God. When you make a statement, your 'yes', will be yes, and your 'no', will be no. You can swear to your own hurt and you will not recant because you have opened your mouth unto God and cannot go back. Some people change like a chameleon. When they see white, they become white; if it is green, they become green. A Christian is not chameleonic in nature. He does not charge interest on his money, he is not even a moneylender. If your brother or sister is in need, give him money. Give him, if you can afford it and expect no interest on it. You will not conspire against innocent people. When you are justified and you exhibit these qualities, the Word of God says that you will never be moved. Psalm 24 is the twin brother of Psalm 15.

***"Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place?
"He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not
lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully" (Psalm 24: 3, 4).***

God has gone to prepare a City and Jesus is there working with Him. Who is qualified to enter there? The justified, the born-again, people with clean hands. Someone with a pure heart cannot imagine evil nor contemplate sin in his heart.

***"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.
"I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. "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.
"I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for
every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself
shall be exalted" (Luke 18:11-14).***

The Pharisee felt he was very righteous. He was happy with the works of his hands but he was far from God. Why? Pharisees were antagonistic to Jesus. They were far from Jesus, far from God. They would not listen to the Word of God nor obey Him. The Pharisee was telling God about his own righteousness: 'I give tithes, I fast', yet with his fasting there was no righteousness. After all the fasting, he condemned another man. Who are you to be a judge? Jesus said that you must remove the beam in your eye to see clearly the mote in your brother's eye.

We thank God that God is not a man who miscarries justice. Man looks at the outward appearance but God looks on the heart. The Pharisee was exalting himself, putting himself on a pedestal that did not belong to him. He even, condemned the humble person. We must be careful not to condemn others, because a sinner yesterday, may become a saint today.

"JUDGE not, that ye be not judged" (Matthew 7:1).

The publican was in the temple. He owned up that he was a sinner, and did not even notice the Pharisee. He did not mind him at all. These things do happen in our time. Some say that the preacher is preaching against them. Who knows you in this crowd? Have we finished preaching the Bible? When the Word of God hits you, take it as a message from God and not from the preacher. The publican knew that if he missed that chance, he might be lost. He did not even look up, but smote his 'chest and prayed, "**God be merciful to me a sinner**". No matter the gravity of the crime you might have committed, God will forgive you. You might have been a cult member or even an armed robber who had committed many atrocities, when you think about these, you may feel God will not forgive you. However, God will forgive you. If you will come to God, confessing and forsaking your sins, promising that you will not go into those evil things again, God will not remember your sins against you any more. The Bible tells us that the publican went home justified—justified by faith. Do you want to pray the prayer of the publican this morning? It was not a long prayer. Ask in faith, plead the Blood of Jesus. "Jesus, wash me with your Blood and I will sin no more". You will be justified. May God help you as you pray.