

Title: **Expectance, Entrance, and Embrace (Part 3)**
Text: **Acts 13:38-41**
Date: **March 23, 2025**

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Big Idea

We all feel this deep need to justify ourselves, to prove that we're right, to make a case for our own merit and worth. We try to go about it so many different ways, both outside and inside the church. But it never goes deep enough and it never lasts long enough and we're never really free to leave the "courtroom" . . . until at last we come to embrace Jesus by faith. In light of the cross, he not only forgives us of our sin, he credits us with his righteousness. In him we are justified, counted righteous, by the highest court in all the cosmos forever!

3b. Embrace (vv. 38-41)

The Greek word twice translated "freed" in v. 39 is actually the same word that nearly everywhere else in Paul is translated as "justified": *dikaioō*. But what is "justification"? What does it mean to be *dikaioō'd*—justified? It's a forensic word; it's a legal word; it's a courtroom word. To be justified, then—in this theological and salvific sense as Paul is using it here—means that in the courtroom of heaven, before the throne of God, you're legally acquitted, you're counted righteous, you're seen as perfect and pure, holy and blameless. You're in good standing with the God of the universe.

1. The Need We Have for It

We all live in the courtroom, as it were. We are all are trying to justify our existence—to prove to others that we are worth something, that we're right. At the very bottom, this is because we've gone wrong with God. We know something's off with us. We can't shake the sense of it. And so we're always trying to compensate, to make up for it, to convince ourselves and others that we're actually good. Even if we say we don't believe in God, we still feel the need to prove ourselves—to quiet that voice somehow. But it never goes deep enough. It never lasts long enough. You're never free to go. You're never fully and

finally justified. And you feel that. What you hoped would bring freedom, only ends up bringing further oppression.

2. The Way We Get It

NOT BY THE LAW

Inevitably, when we try to get right with God on the basis of our own works, we just end up devolving into the same sort of madness that marked us when we were outside the church. If I think I'm to be justified before God on the basis of my own righteousness, then the way I reassure myself of my own righteousness is by comparing myself to and competing with you.

BUT BY FAITH IN CHRIST

Jesus lives the life I should have lived, and yet still he dies the death I should have died, so that when I come and embrace him by faith, both his sinner's death and his sinless life counts for me. He fulfills both the negative and the positive sides of the law on our behalf. He takes the curses of the law and he merits the blessings of the law . . . and then he credits both to my account by grace through faith. The verdict over my life is already in: not guilty, righteous, holy, spotless, justified. Not because of me, but because of him. So what this means is: I don't need to be in the courtroom any longer. He stepped into it so I could step out of it. I'm free to go!

Why the Law Then?

Purpose #1: The Law Is Not a Mountain for Me to Climb, But a Muzzle for My Mouth (Rom. 3:19-20)

Purpose #2: The Law Is Not a Test for Me to Pass, But a Teacher to Point Me to Christ (Gal. 3:21-24)

Purpose #3: The Law Is Not a Rulebook for Me to Follow, But a Relationship for Me to Find (John 5:39-40, 45-46)



Reflection Questions

- "Nothing in my hands I bring, Simply to Thy cross I cling; Naked, come to Thee for dress, Helpless, look to Thee for grace; Foul, I to the fountain fly, Wash me, Savior, or I die." Can you say these words this morning? Why or why not? What would happen if you did?

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Our Mission & Values

Mercy Hill Church exists to help restore us to God, neighbor, and city through the good news of Jesus Christ.

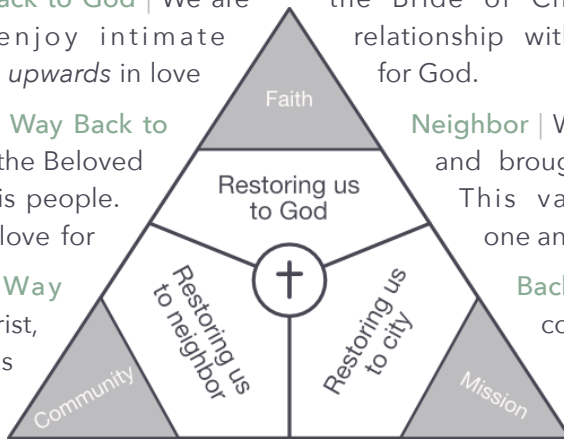
FAITH: The Way Back to God | We are redeemed to enjoy intimate presses our church *upwards* in love

the Bride of Christ, created and relationship with him. This value for God.

COMMUNITY: The Way Back to Christ, adopted in the Beloved relationship with his people. church *inwards* in love for

Neighbor | We are the Family of and brought into covenantal This value presses our one another.

MISSION: The Way the Embassy of Christ, Savior to be his value presses our in love for the



Back to City | We are commissioned by the ambassadors. This church *outwards* unbelieving.

Your Next Steps

When approaching the Christian faith and life, it can be confusing to know where to even begin. Come find us at the Next Steps Table after the service—it would be our joy to help you along in the journey! And if you're a visitor, we have a special gift bag for you. Don't miss it!



Mail: PO Box 23806, San Jose, CA 95153
Phone: (408) 320-7080
Email: info@mercyhillchurch.org
Web: mercyhillchurch.org



Welcome to Mercy Hill Church.
We are so glad you've joined us today!

Announcement Spotlight

Sunday Prayer Walk - Today!

We will be gathering after service today at 1:00pm to do a prayer walk in the local neighborhood! So grab lunch after the service, and consider joining us to pray for our neighboring community, as we hope to have the opportunity to share the gospel with those who are open and ready to engage. We'll have a brief time before the prayer walk to discuss what to pray for, so we invite anyone regardless of experience to join and learn.

If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to Chris Keener at cmkeener2@gmail.com.

Post-Missions Emphasis Week - What's Next?

All Church Campout - Save the Date!

Men's DNA Group - Frontline Men!

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