**CR03 - Justified How - Sermon Summary**

**Source:** <https://pastorbilllehman.org/audio-sermons/>   
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**Main Point 1: The Deception of Self-Righteousness**

**Time Stamp:** [00:00:02]

This opening section addresses the profound deception that affects many Christians regarding their spiritual condition. The speaker references Revelation 3:17, describing the Laodicean church that believes itself to be "rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing" while actually being "wretched and miserable and poor and blind." The deception is so complete that those affected cannot recognize their true condition. Historical quotes from Ellen White reveal that in 1889, "not one in one hundred" understood justification by faith properly, and by 1904, conditions had not significantly improved. The enemy of souls deliberately works to obscure this truth because he knows that if people truly receive justification by faith, his power will be broken. The challenge is that because we believe we understand this doctrine, we resist examining whether we might be deceived about it.

**Self-Introspection Questions:**

1. Am I willing to honestly consider that I might be deceived about my understanding of justification by faith, even though I believe I know this doctrine well?
2. When I examine my spiritual life, do I see evidence of the pride that says "I am right" while potentially being blind to my true spiritual condition?
3. How do I respond when challenged about fundamental beliefs I've held for years—with defensiveness or with humble openness to correction?

**Main Point 2: The Impossibility of Self-Generated Righteousness**

**Time Stamp:** [00:12:31]

The core theological issue centers on understanding what justification actually means and how it is accomplished. Justification is defined as the act of making us righteous before God, conforming to spiritual law. However, human beings face two insurmountable problems: they are incapable of producing true good works, and everything they do is tainted with sin from their past life. The speaker emphasizes that because man placed himself in sin, his good works are valueless before God. Only Christ's righteousness can avail. Even outwardly correct behavior can exist without the renewing power of Christ, motivated by desire for influence, esteem, or self-respect rather than genuine righteousness. Paul's conclusion in Romans 3:28 is clear: "a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law." This is not a deficiency in belief about justification by faith, but a deception about what the genuine article really is.

**Self-Introspection Questions:**

1. Do I truly believe that ALL my righteousness is as filthy rags before God, or do I secretly harbor pride in some of my good works or spiritual achievements?
2. When I examine my motives for obedience, how much is driven by genuine love for God versus desire for approval, fear of consequences, or maintaining my reputation?
3. Can I honestly say that I depend entirely on Christ's righteousness rather than my own efforts, even in small ways?

**Additional Insight: The Harmony of Faith and Works**

**Time Stamp:** [00:25:30]

A crucial clarification emerges regarding the apparent contradiction between Paul and James on faith and works. The speaker explains that James is not disagreeing with Paul about justification by faith alone, but rather examining the nature of genuine faith versus false faith or presumption. James demonstrates that true faith will inevitably produce good works—not as the cause of justification, but as the evidence and result of genuine faith. The sequence is critical: genuine faith leads to justification, which then produces good works. Works are the fruit of faith, not faith the fruit of works. This understanding resolves the apparent tension and shows that both apostles, inspired by the same Holy Spirit, are in complete agreement about the nature of saving faith.

**Self-Introspection Questions:**

1. Do I view my good works as evidence of genuine faith, or do I sometimes slip into thinking they contribute to my justification before God?
2. When I examine the works in my life, do they flow naturally from faith and love, or do they feel forced and motivated by duty or fear?
3. How do I distinguish between genuine faith that transforms the heart and mere intellectual belief that produces external compliance?

**Main Point 3: God's Work of Justification**

**Time Stamp:** [00:30:11]

The final major emphasis reveals who actually accomplishes justification—it is entirely God's work, not human effort. Multiple scripture passages demonstrate that God is the justifier (Romans 8:33), that justification comes through Christ (Acts 13:39), and that it is accomplished by God's grace and Christ's blood, not human activity. The righteousness that justifies comes from outside of man—"unto all and upon all them that believe" (Romans 3:22). Christ's parable of the Pharisee and Publican illustrates this perfectly: the Pharisee who pleaded his good works was not justified, while the Publican who had no good works to offer but simply cried for mercy was justified. This creates the seeming paradox that when you seek righteousness by trying to do right, you fail to obey the law, but when you seek it by faith alone, you actually fulfill the law's requirements through God's power working in you.

**Self-Introspection Questions:**

1. Do I truly understand that justification is something God does FOR me rather than something I do for God, or do I still think I must somehow earn or contribute to it?
2. Can I embrace the humbling truth that I am completely incapable of producing righteousness, like the Ethiopian changing his skin or the leopard changing his spots?
3. Am I willing to come to God empty-handed like the Publican, acknowledging that I have no good works to plead, and trust entirely in God's mercy and Christ's righteousness?

**Closing Highlight**

The speaker concludes with the recognition that this message may be difficult for proud individuals to accept, as it "lays the glory of man in the dust." However, for those who have struggled for years trying to do what's right only to discover their incapability, this is precious and hopeful news. The good news is that God will do for us what we cannot do for ourselves—the very thing we desire most, the thing that's most precious in all of life. The question becomes not "How good am I?" but "Do I believe God is that good?" This truth should produce joy and excitement in believers, and the speaker suggests that our spiritual lethargy and lukewarmness may indicate how far we are from truly grasping this wonderful reality.

**Note:** I encourage you to listen to the complete audio sermon at https://pastorbilllehman.org/audio-sermons/ for keen insights, deeper nuggets, and delicate nuances that Pastor Lehman has crafted into his message.

**Blessings,**  
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