

## READ

### Dead Man Walking

In the movie *Dead Man Walking*, the lead character is on death row, and is brought from his cell down the hallway to the death chamber where he will be electrocuted. Thus, he is a “dead man walking.”

This scene is also a picture of each one of us. We are all walking down the hallway to our death. We live on death row. All of us are “dead men walking.” However, God’s justice and our sin demand something far worse than the electric chair; we deserve the eternal wrath of God.

Amazingly, as we’re taken down that hallway, we discover that we’ve been brought into a great courtroom instead of the death chamber. The jailer shuts the door behind us, we look up, and see a very impressive-looking judge sitting behind the bench.

“You know that you’re on the way to the electric chair, don’t you?” Each of us nods in acknowledgment.

“Well,” he says, “I’m going to pardon you. Would you like to be pardoned for your many crimes, your sin? Would you like to be forgiven so that there’s no more guilt, no more condemnation for your crimes?” Of course, each of us says, “Yes, Your Honor!”

At that moment, the lights in the courtroom flicker and become dim. The judge explains, “Someone who loves you more than you can dream or imagine has just been electrocuted in your place.” He goes on, “Consider yourself pardoned by the power that has been bestowed on me. You are forgiven!”

Now this is the first part of justification by faith: pardon and forgiveness. But there is more. Think of some famous people who have been acquitted or pardoned by the court system. In our minds many of us still think of them as guilty. The pardon or “not guilty” verdict did not change our opinion of them.

So let’s go back to the courtroom scene again. The judge looks at us and says, “I know that when you leave this courtroom, many people—even

among your own family and friends—will still consider you guilty. So I'm not merely going to forgive you.

“I'm going to give you a gift, and that gift is a new reputation. This new reputation means that you are completely right. I am declaring that you have no blemish, no sin, and no guilt. So not only are you pardoned and completely forgiven, but now you are also completely righteous. You will leave this courtroom with this new reputation.”

This is the second part of justification by faith: a new reputation—the declaration that we are righteous. We are not only declared “not guilty,” but we also have a new reputation. Therefore, to live out of our justification is to go back constantly to that courtroom scene. Every day, we have to keep recognizing that we are pardoned, declared not guilty, and instead declared completely righteous.

We return to the courtroom one more time. There's one other thing the great judge says to us: “You have been pardoned and declared right. I'm going to let you go free. But you probably do not have a family to go to.” So the judge takes off his robe and comes down from the bench. (He is dressed in jeans, T-shirt, and sneakers.) He puts his arm around us and says, “Would you like to come and live with me as my children? Would you like to be adopted? I have a room for you in my mansion. I will provide you everything you will ever need for life. You will have countless brothers and sisters there, who will love you and whom you will love. And I will make you an heir to everything that I own.”

“How on earth is all this possible?” we ask. The Judge then explains, “I want you to understand that all of this is possible because of my one and only Son, Jesus. He lived a perfect life so that you could have his perfect record. He suffered terribly for you, and rose again for your justification. All of this, he did for you. And for this reason, once I adopt you, I will view you exactly as I do him—sinless and holy. Since you are adopted into my family, I am making you a co-heir with him. What's more, I am going to give you all the help you need to live in my family.”

So this great Judge who has now become your Father provides you with another person, the Holy Spirit, to indwell you, to give you the power

to live this new life. The Spirit is the one who will lead you “in the way everlasting.” Your Father knows that you cannot possibly live this life on your own, so he gives you his Holy Spirit to indwell you, convict you of sin, comfort you, teach you, and reassure you of God’s great love for you.

So, for example, as you become more and more secure in this truth about yourself you’ll be able to listen to criticism—even unfair criticism—without having to prove that you’re right. You’ll be able to listen in order to see what you can learn; you can listen to see how you can help the other person who’s criticizing you. You can actually be more concerned for him than you are for yourself. You no longer have to prove that you are right and okay, because your identity with God is right and secure.

### **Check off the assignments you’ve completed:**

- Listened to Message 5
- Memorized Romans 15:13
- Completed the exercises
- Read “Dead Man Walking”
- Updated your prayer partner