

Justification By Faith

Galatians 2:15-19

“We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, ¹⁶ knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. ¹⁷ “But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! ¹⁸ For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. ¹⁹ For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God.”

In our study of Galatians, we have taken a long look at the Apostle Paul and how he felt about his "divine" calling into the ministry. He has told us that he was called into the service of God, "... not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father..." Paul also let us know that if God did the calling, then God was the one he was going to seek to please and not man! For the remainder of chapter one, and for the first half of chapter two, Paul tells us about his life immediately after his going into the ministry, and how he had to strive to be accepted by the rest of the Apostles.

Tonight, as we continue our study in this book of Galatians, we are going to look at "Justification by Faith."

In the year 1512 a young man by the name of Martin Luther was serving as a professor in the University of Wittenberg. He was a man of deep religious convictions. He had entered the monastery as a Roman Catholic and was now on the staff of the University as a teacher and professor. **The day came when Martin Luther become aware of the fact that something was missing in his life concerning his relationship with God.** In desperation Martin Luther went to Rome, the "Holy City," the home of the Pope and the "Holy Roman Church."

When Martin Luther arrived in Rome, he found that the Church was corrupt and the Pope was selling "indulgences" to the people around him for a year in advance. With his heart burdened, Luther went to the "sacred stairs" of the Mother Church and crawled up them kissing each, of them as he went. When Luther had finished his journey up the "sacred stairs," his heart was still on edge, and there was no peace with God. Martin Luther then went into the Pope's chambers and confessed all of his "known sin" and asked for prayer, but all to no avail.

Then a close friend of Martin Luther suggested that he take a New Testament and read it. This was a new wrinkle, for the Bible was a "banned book" and the interpretation of it was left to the Pope and higher leaders of the Roman Catholic Church. Nevertheless, Martin Luther was desperate so he took the New Testament and began to read. It was through this experience that he realized that the Bible taught that the "just shall live by faith." Martin Luther realized that the Church, the Pope, nor the Sacraments, nor Baptism, not any other ritual was the mode of salvation!

Paul said in Romans 3:24,28, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus ... Therefore, we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law." Therefore, the Bible teaches that a man is justified by faith apart from the law.

What is the doctrine of justification? First of all, let me tell you that when we talk about the doctrine of justification, we are not speaking of *justice*! Justification is the reversal of God's attitude toward the sinner, because of the sinner's new relationship with Christ.

You see, when a person comes to God, through Christ, God declares that person righteous as if he had never sinned. And it was very thought that caused David to declare in Psalms 103:12, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." We start a new life in Christ, as shown in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new."

Justification is more than a pardon, it removes the guilt as well as the sin!

How, then, can a person be justified? The question of how men are justified before God is not a new one by any means. We find in the writings of Job 25:4, "How then can man be just before God? Or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?" But Paul tells us in Romans 8:30, "Whom he called, them he also justified."

To better see what justification *is*, look with me for just a moment as what justification is *not*.

First of all, justification does not come by works. Paul said in Galatians 2:16, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

You might live the best life in North Carolina. You might be the man or woman with the highest morals in America, but unless you have come to the place of committing your life to Christ, then you are hell bound with the rest of the reprobates! You might have sold all you have and given the money to the poor, or you might have joined the Church and "turned over a new leaf," but unless you have come to Christ, you might as well be back in the "hog-pen" of sin!

Secondly, justification does not come by performing religious duties. I am reminded of a young man coming to God with the desire to know how one might have eternal life. Jesus told him that he must turn over everything he had to Him through faith, and we are told that he "went away sorrowfully."

I am reminded of a man that was a very religious man, and was a member of the Jewish Sanhadrin, the ruling body of the Jewish religion. But we are told that as he came to Jesus by night seeking the answer to the question of salvation, Jesus answered, "You must be born again."

I am also reminded of the Apostle Paul. He was a member of the Sanhadrin also, and a Pharisee. Paul had been baptized and was trying to live a life of works, but found that he was on the road to

destruction. Paul now writes in Romans 1:17, "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, the just shall live by faith."

You can join every church in North Carolina. You can be baptized until you become "water-logged" and wrinkled. You can eat the Lord's Supper until you become sick on crackers and juice. **You can memorize a string of "prayer beads" six feet long.** You can pray until your knees become bloody from kneeling. But until you put your faith in Jesus Christ, then you shall "lift up your eyes in torment"!

Thirdly, justification is a free gift from God to man through faith. We are told once more in Romans 3:24, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Too many people are trying to *pay* for their salvation, and this simply cannot be done. Justification originated in the heart of God, and because of His love for us, He offers us salvation through Jesus Christ.

What, then, are the results of justification?

First of all, justification by faith brings out a confession of sin and a belief in Jesus Christ. We are told in Romans 10:9-10, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

A faith which does not bring forth a confession of sin and a belief in the Lord Jesus Christ, is not the kind of faith that will lead to salvation and justification. I am convinced that saving faith will produce a mind and heart that is not ashamed to take a stand for Jesus!

Secondly, justification by faith brings forth good works. We are told in James 2:14, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?" Paul writes in Romans 7:4, "Wherefore, my brethren, you also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that you should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God."

A faith that causes a person to join the church and sing and pray, yet does not cause him to live a life of any kind of service, and with no spiritual purpose, according to James 2:14 is suspect in his faith. Please understand that I am not talking about some form of legalistic bondage right here, but I am simply saying that it is my conviction that God has never saved one single person just to sit down and wait to get to heaven.

Thirdly, justification by faith brings forth eternal life. Paul says in Romans 6:22, "But now being made free from sin, and become servants of God, you have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." We are told in Titus 3:7, "That, being justified by his grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." John' says " ... he that hath the Son hath life."

The last product of justification is peace. Paul could express his peace because of his conviction of this truth shared with Timothy, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." Paul says in Romans 5:1, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."