

JUSTIFICATION - FAITH OR WORKS?  
(ROMANS)

I. INTRODUCTION.

- A. The Book Of *Romans* Has Been Given The Highest Praise By Bible Scholars, Coleridge Describing It As "The Most Profound Work In Existence."
- B. Others Urge The Serious Study Of The Book Of *Romans*, For, As They Express It: "If You Get *Romans*, God Will Get You."
- C. The Book Of *Romans* Deserves Our Serious Study, Not Only Because Of Its Profound Message, But Also Because This Message Has Been The Occasion Of Some Of The Most Grievous Distortions Of Any Of The Sacred Scriptures. (2 Pet. 3:16)
  - 1. Certain of Paul's statements have been taken out of context and twisted into the doctrine of justification by faith only.
  - 2. This "wresting of the Scriptures" has so influenced the thinking of people in the religious world that many volumes have been written propagating this theory.

II. AIM.

- A. To See What Has And Does Cause Such Confusion About The Message To The Romans.
- B. To See What The Book Of *Romans* Really Teaches About Justification.

III. OUTLINE.

- A. SINCE THE GENERAL THEME OF *ROMANS* IS QUITE PLAIN AND EASILY UNDERSTOOD (i.e., JUSTIFICATION IN CHRIST), WHY IS THERE SUCH CONFUSION ABOUT ITS MESSAGE?
  - 1. In dealing with religious error, emphasis is put at the point of departure from truth.

2. The "unlearned and unstable" (*2 Pet. 3:16*) overreact to this emphasis and wrest the scriptures to their own destruction.
3. Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, had the great responsibility of correcting the false doctrine of the Judaizing teachers, the first major error with which the early church was confronted. (*Acts 15:1-31*)
  - a. Because of their long attachment to the Law of Moses, the Jewish Christians found it very difficult to see that the Law was to have no part in a person's justification in Christ.
  - b. Paul had to use strong language to dissuade the Jewish brethren from binding the old covenant Law upon Christians.
  - c. Except for such strong defensive measures as the letters to the Romans, the Galatians, part of the letters to the Corinthians and the Colossians (as well as the book of Hebrews), we would not have the Christian religion today. (It would be Judaeo-Christian.)
4. In later times, not taking into account the religious error with which Paul was dealing, men have overreacted to the emphasis Paul put on salvation by faith in Christ, apart from works of the law.
5. Martin Luther, reacting to the Catholic errors of paying indulgences, penance, and meritorious works, seized upon the book of *Romans* and made it the platform for his doctrine of justification by faith only, which has so influenced the Protestant world to this day.
6. Today, many have "optical illusions" in viewing the doctrine of justification.
  - a. Some can see justification *only as viewed from the standpoint of faith.*
  - b. Others can see justification *only as viewed from the standpoint of works.*
  - c. As long as the subject of justification is viewed from an "either-or" angle, the false illusions and erroneous conclusions will continue to exist.

B. WHAT, THEN, IS THE MESSAGE OF PAUL TO THE ROMANS ON THE SUBJECT OF JUSTIFICATION?

1. All men have violated the righteousness of God and need justification. (*Rom. 3:23*)

a. Both Jew and Gentile are under the condemnation of God. (*Rom. 3:9-12*)

1) The Gentiles rejected the knowledge of God and were alienated from God by wicked works. (*Rom. 1:20-32; Col. 1:21*)

a) Immorality and degradation always follow rejection of the truth of God.

b) Intellectual pride breeds spiritual and moral folly. (*Rom. 1:22-24*)

2) The Jews rejected their more complete knowledge of God and were alienated, just as the Gentiles, by wicked works. (*Rom. 2:5-9*)

a) The Jews had many advantages, the most important of which was that "unto them were committed the oracles of God." (*Rom. 3:1-2*)

(1) They regarded being custodians of the Law of such great importance, that obedience to the Law for them was relatively unimportant. (*Rom. 2:17-24*)

(2) National pride caused them to reject the knowledge of God and His righteousness, and fostered in them the mistaken idea that, because of their favored position with God, He would have a "good-natured indifference" to their sins. (*Rom. 2:3*)

b) Circumcision, in which the Jews put such trust, did not avail anything because of their failure to keep the Law from the heart. (*Rom. 2:25-29; Matt. 23:23-28*)

2. Justification has been made possible by God in Christ. (*Rom. 3:24-25*)

- a. Because His justice required punishment for sin, God caused Jesus to suffer the punishment of sin for us, "that he might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." (Rom. 3:26)
    - 1) Man had hopelessly alienated himself from God. (Rom. 3:9-12)
    - 2) God took the initiative in making reconciliation possible. (Rom. 5:8)
  - b. Justification was not made possible through the Law of Moses. (Rom. 3:28; Acts 13:38-39)
    - 1) Not even Abraham, in whom the Jews put their trust, was justified by the Law. (Rom. 4:13)
    - 2) Abraham was justified by faith, long before the Law was given.
    - 3) In fact, Abraham was justified even before his circumcision. (Rom. 4:10)
    - 4) The promise of God to Abraham was not fulfilled through the Law, but through faith. (Rom. 4:13)
  - c. Justification was made possible for all men, not the Jews only. (Rom. 4:16)
  - d. Justification was made possible only in Christ. (Rom. 4:25 - 5:1, 6-11)
    - 1) Christ died for the ungodly. (Rom. 5:6)
    - 2) We are justified by His blood. (Rom. 5:9)
    - 3) We are reconciled to God by the death of His Son. (Rom. 5:10)
  - e. The need for justification goes all the way back to Adam's sin. (Rom. 5:12-19)
3. Justification in Christ becomes a reality at the point of baptism. (Rom. 6:3-7)
- a. We are baptized into the death of Christ. (ver. 3)
  - b. We are buried with Christ in baptism. (ver. 4)

- c. We are raised, as He was raised, to a new life in Christ. (vs. 5-7)
  - 1) In baptism one's relationship to God is changed because of God's provision of reconciliation to Him through the blood of Christ. (Rom. 5:9-10)
  - 2) No man can be justified outside of this new relationship, i.e. outside of Christ. (Rom. 3:24)
  - 3) In Christ, the sinner is justified from all past sins. (Rom. 3:25)
- d. Justification is again pinpointed to the time of obedience in baptism. (Rom. 6:17-18)
- 4. After justification, we are to yield ourselves to God as instruments of righteousness. (Rom. 6:13)
  - a. In *Romans 6:19-23*, we have the emphatic statement of Paul that after justification from past sins, the Christian is required to live a life in harmony with the reconciliation to God which has been accomplished by being baptized into Christ.
  - b. Walking in newness of life (6:4), serving the Lord instead of sin (6:6, 12-16), is to characterize the life of those justified.
  - c. The Lord is not indifferent to "works" either before (Rom. 2:5-10) or after (Rom. 6:6, 12-19) justification. The wages for the impenitent are still the same. (Rom. 6:23)
- 5. Contrast of life under the Law with life in Christ.
  - a. Paul continues to deal with the problem of *freeing Christianity from the Law*.
    - 1) This time he uses the analogy of the death of a man, which frees his wife to be married to another. (Rom. 7:1-3)
    - 2) The Jewish Christians had been freed from the Law by baptism into the death of Christ, and were free to be married to the resurrected Lord. (Rom. 7:4)

b. What is the advantage of this freedom from the Law in Christ?

- 1) Under the Law, the fruit was unto death (*Rom. 7:5*); in Christ, the fruit is unto God. (*Rom. 7:4c*)
- 2) Under the Law, one served in the oldness of the letter; in Christ, one serves in newness of spirit. (*Rom. 7:6*)
- 3) Under the Law, man could agree intellectually that the law was good, but was unable to cope with his sinful nature. (*Rom. 7:16*)
- 4) Under the Law, man was under condemnation; in Christ, he is justified. (*Rom. 8:1*)
- 5) In Christ, the law of the spirit of life has made us free from the law of sin and death. (*Rom. 8:2*)
  - a) In Christ we walk after the Spirit, not after the flesh. (*Rom. 8:1, 4*)
  - b) In Christ we are spiritual, not carnal. (*Rom. 8:5-7*)
  - c) In Christ the Spirit is life because of righteousness, the body is dead because of sin. (*Rom. 8:10*)
  - d) In Christ the indwelling Spirit quickens our mortal bodies. (*Rom. 8:11*)
  - e) In Christ we must put to death the deeds of the body through the Spirit. (*Rom. 8:13*)
  - f) In Christ we are God's children, led by the Spirit. (*Rom. 8:14-16*)
  - g) In Christ we are heirs, together with Christ, of eternal glory. (*Roms. 8:17-18*)
  - h) In Christ we have the intercession of the Spirit. (*Rom. 8:26-27*)
  - i) In Christ we have assurance of the love of God (*Rom. 8:31-33*) and of Christ. (*Rom. 8:34-39*)

6. After drawing such a sharp contrast between life under the Law and life in Christ, Paul laments Israel's rejection of Christ.
  - a. God had given His people the Law to help them see their sinfulness and their need of redemption.
  - b. Instead of becoming humble and dependent upon God, they became proud and self-righteous.
  - c. Jesus was a stumblingstone to the Jews because they were seeking to establish their own righteousness through the Law. (*Rom. 9:30-33; 10:1-4*)
  - d. Righteousness cannot be established through the Law; the Jews must also be saved in Christ. (*Rom. 10:4, 12-13*)
    - 1) The word of faith in Christ must be preached to them. (*Rom. 10:8, 14, 17*)
    - 2) They must believe in their hearts that God raised Him from the dead. (*Rom. 10:9-10*)
    - 3) They must confess with the mouth Jesus as Lord. (*Rom. 10:9-10*)
    - 4) They must obey the gospel. (*Rom. 10:16-21; 11:23*)
  - e. The Gentiles must not boast of their place in God's kingdom. (*Rom. 11:18-22*)
    - 1) The rejection of the Jews, because of their unbelief, is a vivid lesson to the Gentiles whose own place in God's kingdom depends upon their faith. (*Rom. 11:20*)
    - 2) They, too, will be cut off if they do not continue to trust and obey God. (*Rom. 11:21-22*)
7. Justification in Christ involves personal sacrifice and practical commitment. (*Chapters 12 - 15*)
  - a. To God, we must present our bodies a living sacrifice and commit ourselves to knowing and doing the will of God. (*Rom. 12:1-2*)

- b. To our brethren, we must be humble and hospitable, sacrificing our own rights to avoid causing a brother to stumble. (*Rom. 12:3-21; Chapter 14 and 15:1-7*)
- c. To our civil rulers, we must submit in obedience to law and taxation. (*Rom. 13:1-7*)

#### IV. CONCLUSION.

- A. Because Of The Prevalence And Persistence Of The Judaizing Teachers Who Required The Keeping Of The Law For Justification In Christ, Much Of Paul's Time Was Spent Explaining That The Law Had Nothing To Do With Justification.
- B. Justification For Jews Or Gentiles Is Possible Only IN CHRIST: Therefore, One Can Be Justified Only When He Is Baptized INTO CHRIST And Continues To ABIDE IN CHRIST. (*John 15:6*)
- C. Justification Was Accomplished Neither By Our Faith Nor By Our Works, But By The Perfect Faith And Work Of Jesus, Whose Life Was Accepted In Payment Of The Penalty For Our Sins.
- D. Justification Is Accomplished Neither By Our Faith Alone Nor By Our Meritorious Works, But Only In Christ Whose Life Is Accepted By God In Payment For Our Sins.