

"The Doctrine of Justification"

Romans 3:21-5:11

Part 8

Introduction: In our study of Romans we have recently been looking at how Jesus Christ died to pay the penalty for our sins and how we are justified by grace through faith in His finished work upon the cross. When we rest our faith in Jesus Christ then God takes away our sin and IMPUTES to our account His own righteousness.

Romans 3:22

²² *Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:*

There is a picture of this in the story of the Prodigal Son.

Luke 15:11-23

¹¹ *And he said, A certain man had two sons:*

¹² *And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.*

¹³ *And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.*

¹⁴ *And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.*

¹⁵ *And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.*

¹⁶ *And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.*

¹⁷ *And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!*

¹⁸ *I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,*

¹⁹ *And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.*

²⁰ And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

²¹ And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

²² But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

²³ And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:

The father forgave his son but before the son could sit at the table of his father he needed new clothing. He could not sit at his father's table while wearing the garments he had worn in the world and in the pig pen. So, he was given a new robe, ring and shoes. This is a beautiful picture of what happens to us when we come to the Father for salvation. We are given a new Garment and it is the Righteousness of God.

Getting back to Romans, Paul explained that salvation was by faith and not by works. Now to some this was nothing more than Paul's personal theory. The Jews especially would have questioned Paul's teaching and so as we step into chapter 4 of Romans Paul attaches his teaching to Abraham. This is the man whom the Jews held in high esteem. They saw Abraham as the pattern which they were to follow.

In Romans 4:1-8 Paul shows his readers that Abraham and David were both saved by faith and not by works. Paul solidifies this point by showing that Abraham was saved by believing God. Paul uses the Scriptures as his Authority to make his point for in Romans 4:3 he asks the question, "For what saith the Scripture?". The Bible is very clear in Genesis 15:6 that Abraham was saved by faith. Also, it is evident that Abraham was not saved by the Law for the Law was given to Moses after Abraham had died.

I. Abraham's Justification
Part 3
"Religion does not Save!"

In the first 8 verses we can see that Abraham was saved by FAITH AND NOT BY WORKS. Now as we move on we shall see that Abraham was saved by GRACE AND NOT BY THE LAW.

Notice Romans 4:9

Now Paul is going to show that circumcision had nothing to do with Abraham's justification and as he works through this section we shall see there is much application for us today.

Now before we get into these verses let me show you the misunderstanding which the Jews had concerning circumcision.

The Jewish apocryphal Book of Jubilees declares "This law is for all generations for ever, and there is no circumcision of the time, and no passing over one day out of the eight days; for it is an eternal ordinance, ordained and written on the heavenly tables. And every one that is born, the flesh of whose foreskin is not circumcised on the eighth day, belongs not to the children of the covenant which the Lord made with Abraham, for he belongs to the children of destruction; nor is there moreover any sign on him that he is the Lord's but (he is destined) to be destroyed and slain from the earth."

In other words, the idea here is that if a man is not circumcised it is not possible for him to enter heaven. Without circumcision he does not belong to the Lord.

Circumcision was considered such a mark of God's favor that it was taught that if a Jew had practiced idolatry his circumcision must first be removed before he could go down to hell. Since it is humanly impossible to remove circumcision, presumably that would be accomplished by a direct act of God.

It was taught that "Circumcision saves from hell"

It is taught that "God swore to Abraham that no one who was circumcised should be sent to hell"

It is taught that Abraham sits before the gate of hell and does not allow that any circumcised Israelite should enter there.

The Jew believed that circumcision was the means for salvation. So, they would look at what Paul has taught in Romans 3 and they would ask several questions;

- If we cannot be saved by works, then why did God command us to be circumcised?
- What part does the ceremonies and the rituals have in salvation?
- What is the meaning of circumcision then?
- What is the benefit of circumcision?

The Jews believed with everything they had that circumcision was the means of salvation. Remember in the New Testament that when Paul would be used by God to plant a church that it was not long until a group known as Judaizers would come in and they would begin to teach that keeping the Law was required for salvation. Paul had to deal with this very teaching in Galatians.

Galatians 5:1-4

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

² *Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.*

³ *For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.*

⁴ *Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.*

Paul made it very clear that if any man was trusting in circumcision for salvation then he was under the Law and he was a debtor to the entire law, in other words if he was going to be saved by the Law he had to keep the entire Law perfectly.

Notice Romans 4:9 again.

Here Paul asks the question, "Does the blessedness of forgiveness and justification come upon those who are circumcised only or is it possible for the uncircumcised to share in the same blessedness?"

The Jew would say, "It only comes on the circumcised!" Paul would respond by saying, "I have showed you that justification came to Abraham by faith." The Jew would push back by saying, "Yes but Abraham was also circumcised!"

Notice Romans 4:10

Paul now asks a question and then he answers the question. He asks the Jew if Abraham was justified after he was circumcised or before he was circumcised?" The answer is he was declared to be righteous BEFORE he was circumcised, and this is confirmed by the Scriptures. This then means that if Abraham, as great as he was, was justified without being circumcised then all others can be justified without being circumcised! Let me show you what is recorded.

Genesis 17:24-26

²⁴ *And Abraham was ninety years old and nine, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.*

²⁵ *And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.*

²⁶ *In the selfsame day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son.*

Abraham was 99 years old when he was circumcised, and Ishmael was 13 years old at that time. They were both circumcised the same day.

Genesis 15:2-6

² And Abram said, LORD God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?

³ And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir.

⁴ And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.

⁵ And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.

⁶ And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

Here we see that Abraham was childless when he was justified so he was justified at least 14 years before he was circumcised. So, the question is, "WHY THEN WAS HE CIRCUMCISED?"

Notice Romans 4:11a

Here we see that Abraham's circumcision was twofold. It was a SIGN and a SEAL. Circumcision served as a seal which confirmed to Abraham that he was regarded by God as righteous through faith. Circumcision did not bring righteousness but was the visible sign to Abraham's descendants of the righteousness that was imputed to him by faith. Once righteousness has been imputed to an individual, he or she is sealed as it were forever.

Warren Wiersbe explains that "As a sign, it (circumcision) was evidence that he belonged to God and believed His promise. As a seal, it was a reminder to him that God had given the promise and would keep it. Circumcision did not add to Abraham's salvation; it merely attested to it."

There is yet something else which the circumcision was a sign of, it was a picture of what God had done in the heart of Abraham. God had circumcised his heart in that He had cut the flesh away from the heart.

Notice Romans 4:11b-12

Abraham has become the "FATHER OF ALL WHO BELIEVE". For just as Abraham believed God and he then received the imputed righteousness of God so it is the same for ALL who believe. The moment anyone rests their faith in Jesus Christ God imputes His righteous to their account. As the FATHER OF CIRCUMCISION Abraham is a picture of what happens

to the heart of everyone who rests their faith in Christ. God changes the heart and He circumcises the heart in that He cuts away the flesh from the heart.

Colossians 2:10-11

¹⁰ *And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:*

¹¹ *In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:*

Before we were saved the FLESH controlled the heart but when we were saved God circumcised the heart in that He cut away the flesh and we no longer are enslaved to the flesh and his desires.

Now before we get to an application with all this there is a question that we must consider and answer, "Why did God command all of Israel to be circumcised when we know they were not all saved?"

There were several reasons for the Jew's circumcision.

1. It was an outward evidence that showed they were God's Covenant people.
2. It was an outward sign that they were physical descendants of Abraham.

But there is yet a 3rd reason that is very important.

3. It was a reminder to every Jew what God desired to do to their heart.

The sins of the flesh contaminated the heart and so God desired to cut away the flesh from the heart. God had told them in the Law what He desired to do.

Deuteronomy 30:6

⁶ *And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.*

So, every time the Jews administered circumcision they should have been reminded of what God desired to do in their hearts.

Conclusion/Application:

Now we know that Abraham was circumcised after he was justified so the circumcision had nothing to do with his justification. But the Jews eventually took the practice of circumcision and they twisted the true meaning and in their sinful ways they made it a means of justification and this distorted teaching has sent many people to hell.

Today in our society it is not circumcision but there are many other "Religious practices" that "churches" have adopted as means of justification.

One of the major teachings today is baptism. There are many who believe you **MUST** be baptized in order to be accepted by God. Then there are confirmation classes, church membership, keeping the 10 Commandments, partaking of the Lord's Table, dressing in certain apparel, having hair that is just the right length and the list goes on and on. This is all RELIGION and not SALVATION. No one is saved by any of these, but Satan has convinced many that Religious practices and ceremonies will earn you a place in heaven. Jesus warned about this very teaching in the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 7:13-14

¹³ Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

¹⁴ Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Jesus talked about two paths here. One is broad filled with many people and it leads to hell. The other is narrow and has few people on it and it leads to life.

The BROAD path is the path of religion. It is a path marked with a sign posted by Satan that says, "THIS WAY TO HEAVEN". Satan knows people would not get on a path marked "THIS WAY TO HELL". So, in Jesus day Satan used the RELIGIOUS teachings of the Scribes and the Pharisees to lead the people straight to hell. He is doing the same thing today with baptism, confirmation classes, the Lord's Table, keeping the Law and so on. He does not care what people believe just as long as it is not the Truth.

Abraham was saved apart from any ceremonies and rituals and so are we. Religious practices have nothing to do with our justification.