

"The Doctrine of Justification"

Romans 3:21-5:11

Part 9

Introduction: Last week in our study of Romans we looked at how Abraham was justified by faith before he was circumcised. This is a very important point to understand because the Jews placed so much emphasis upon circumcision. They believed that circumcision was a means of salvation and that any man who was circumcised could not be sentenced to hell. The Jews had completely missed the meaning behind circumcision. There were several reasons for the Jew's circumcision.

- 1. It was an outward sign 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 heart is controlled by the flesh before a person is saved, 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.

Abraham's circumcision had a twofold purpose.

Notice Romans 4:11

Here we see that it was a SIGN and a SEAL. As a SIGN it showed that Abraham belonged to God and believed His promises. As a SEAL it showed that Abraham's justification was permanent. God's promises to him would be fulfilled.

Now in all of this Paul has shown that Abraham was NOT justified by circumcision for he was declared righteous at least 14 years before he was circumcised.

In this text circumcision represents any religious practice, rite or ceremony. In other words, salvation is by grace through faith and not by baptism, church membership, keeping the Law, confirmation or any religious practice.

This now brings us to where we are in our study tonight.

I. Abraham's Justification
Part 4
"Religion does not Save!"

In Romans 4:1-8 we saw that Abraham was saved by faith and not by works. In Romans 4:9-12 we saw that Abraham was saved by grace and not by the Law. Now this thought continues in the next three verses.

Notice Romans 4:13

As I read this verse there was a question which came to my mind, "What does Paul mean here when he tells us that Abraham would be HEIR OF THE WORLD?" This is not a promise that we find in the Old Testament anywhere. So, what does it mean? It has everything to do with the fact that through faith Abraham was a child of God.

Romans 8:16-17

¹⁶ The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

¹⁷ And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

Here is a promise to all believers that we are JOINT HEIRS with Christ. This also includes Abraham because he was also a child of God.

Notice Romans 4:13 again.

The promise of being heir of the world was not just to Abraham but to his seed also and by faith we are the "spiritual seed" of Abraham. So, as children of God we all are JOINT HEIRS with Christ and so when Jesus returns at the end of the Great Tribulation to rule over the world it will all belong to Him and since we are JOINT HEIRS as well as Abraham, it will belong to all believers.

Notice Romans 4:13 again.

The promise was not based upon keeping the Law, but it was through the righteousness of faith. In other words, Abraham was not commanded to keep the Law in order to see the promise fulfilled. He believed God and his faith secured the promise.

Notice Romans 4:14

Here Paul reasons with anyone who is a legalist. If those who keep the Law are heirs, then faith IS MADE VOID and the promise is of none effect because there is not one person who can keep the Law. Notice the words of William MacDonald.

"Faith is made void" writing "Faith is set aside because it is a principle that is completely opposite to law: faith is a matter of believing, while law is a matter of doing. The promise would then be worthless because it would be based on conditions that no one would be able to meet."

Notice the words of **Newton** on this verse.

"When we rely upon our system of morality or code of ethics or the Golden Rule for righteousness "the promise is nullified." What promise does Paul mean? He's referring to the gospel promise made to Abraham of the righteousness by faith through Christ on behalf of sinners. This promise made in the gospel is nullified or rendered to no effect. In other words, the gospel means nothing apart from faith alone in Christ. If we are clinging to anything that we've done that might accord with the Ten Commandments or the Golden Rule or any system of morality as the means to righteousness, then we have rendered the gospel promises void."

There is something in this verse that we really need to see.

Notice Romans 4:14 again.

The phrase "FAITH IS MADE VOID" is so very important. The word "VOID" here is the word "*katargeo*" and we need to see what it means.

The meaning is to make the power or force of something ineffective and so to render powerless, reduce to inactivity. To do away with. To put out of use. To cause to be idle or useless. To render entirely idle, inoperative or ineffective. Cause something to come to an end or cause it to cease to happen. To abolish or cause not to function. To free or release from an earlier obligation or relationship. To no longer take place.

Now let me tell you what this means to you and me. There are many people who desire to mix works and faith with salvation. There are those who believe that we are saved by faith PLUS works and they teach that after we are saved we can lose our salvation if we do or do not do certain things. That theology is completely defeated within this verse. Paul is saying in this verse that if ANYONE is trusting in ANY kind of works plus faith for salvation then the WORKS they are trusting in COMPLETELY make VOID the FAITH they claim to have. In other words, God will accept us only on the means of **FAITH** and if anyone mixes works into salvation God says their FAITH IS MADE VOID. This means the FAITH they claim to have has no value at all! Salvation is FAITH plus NOTHING! Therefore, Jesus said what He said in Matthew 7.

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.

There are few that find TRUE salvation by GRACE through FAITH ALONE because man has a very difficult time accepting the fact there is NOTHING he can do to please God.

Notice Romans 4:15

Here is why the Law and works cannot be mixed with grace. The Law brings about Wrath.

The Law exposes man's sinfulness. The Law serves to stimulate sin. The Law brings about wrath because of man's disobedience to the specific Law. It condemns those who fail to keep its commandments perfectly and continuously. And since none can do that, all who are under the law are condemned to death.

2 Corinthians 3:6-7

⁶ Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

⁷ But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away:

The Law is a ministration of death and the Letter/Law killeth. In other words, the Law condemns man to death because not of us can ever keep it. Let me show you what Paul wrote in Galatians.

Galatians 3:19

¹⁹ Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

²⁰ Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.

²¹ Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.

²² But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

²³ But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.

²⁴ Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

²⁵ But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

The Law was given so that man would see his true sinful condition. It was NEVER given to save anyone because not one person can keep the law perfectly and God requires perfection.

James 2:10

¹⁰ For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

The law brings men into condemnation thus it works wrath. So, anyone who desires to mix faith with the Law is putting themselves under the wrath and the condemnation of God.

Now as we move on to the next verse we shall see in this section that Abraham was justified not by his power but by the power of God. Notice the words of Steven Cole.

In 1947 a rumor spread that the Ford Motor Company would give a Ford in exchange for every copper penny dated 1943. The rumor spread so fast that Ford offices throughout the country were jammed with thousands of requests for information. The U.S. mint also received a large volume of inquiries. It all turned out to be a hoax. The statistics of the mint show that in 1943 there were over one billion pennies minted from steel-zinc, but due to a copper shortage, the number of copper pennies was exactly zero. There has been a rumor abroad in the human race for centuries that entrance into heaven can be obtained by good works. But it's not true. The fact is, there are no works made on earth that are acceptable in heaven. All of our works are tainted by sin. The only righteousness that gains entrance to heaven is the righteousness of Jesus Christ graciously imputed to sinners who believe in Him. Your eternal destiny depends on your understanding and personally believing the truth that Paul has been hammering on in Romans 4, that we are justified (declared righteous) by faith alone. We are not justified by works or by moral behavior, but rather by faith in the God who credits righteousness to the ungodly apart from works. This blessing is not based on religious rituals or on keeping the Law, which only serves to condemn us. Rather, as Paul now shows, saving faith is rooted in God's grace, it rests on God's promise, it revels in God's glory, and it relies on God's power.

Notice Romans 4:16

Salvation is by grace through faith which makes it SURE to the Jews who believe and to the Gentiles who believe. Abraham is the father of us all for he is the example of salvation by grace through faith. If salvation was by the keeping of the Law, then it would not be SURE because it would depend upon our ability to keep the Law and therefore no one who have the promise. But salvation is by grace through faith and it depends upon God's faithfulness to keep His Word therefore it is SURE. Let me show you something that happened when Abraham was justified.

Genesis 15:6-18

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

⁷ And he said unto him, I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it.

⁸ And he said, LORD God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?

⁹ And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.

¹⁰ And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not.

¹¹ And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

¹² And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him.

¹³ And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years;

¹⁴ And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.

¹⁵ And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age.

¹⁶ But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.

¹⁷ And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces.

¹⁸ In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram,

This Covenant was done after the manner of the Chaldeans. The animals were divided, and the two parties were to walk between the dead animals. By this they were promising to keep their side of the Covenant. Abraham waited but he never was permitted to walk between the animal sacrifices but instead it was God the Father and God the Son. Let me tell you why Abraham never was permitted to walk through. Because then the Covenant would have been hinged upon his ability to keep his part and he would have failed. So, God walked through the animals thus stating that the Covenant was based upon His faithfulness and not Abraham's.

Conclusion:

Two thousand years ago there was a New Covenant made. It was made between the Father and the Son. Jesus died to satisfy the righteousness and the wrath of the Father. We are brought into this New Covenant when we repent and place our faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. This Covenant is not based upon our faithfulness for we were not there at the cross. This Covenant is based upon God faithfulness to fulfill His promises to us who have trusted in the finished work of Jesus Christ.