

Romans
Message 37
What is Justification by Faith?
Rom 3:23-31

- 23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;
- 24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:
- 25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;
- 26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.
- 27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.
- 28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.
- 29 Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also:
- 30 Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.
- 31 Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law. KJV

Introduction:

There is no more important question in the world than “***How is a person made right in the eyes of God?***”

Modern Christianity glibly replies: “***by believing in Jesus Christ.***” And, there is a sense in which this is a true statement but the way that it is used commonly is far from the truth.

The Christian Church has always held what Paul affirms, that we are ***Justified by Faith*** but many in our day, and for the last 150 years has subtly shifted this to be that we are ***Justified by Believing*** which is not exactly accurate as is shown in the book of James.

James 2:19

19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. KJV

And yet many modern day Christian workers think that if they can persuade someone to pray a prayer and ‘ask Jesus into their heart’ they have converted a soul and saved that person from eternal destruction. This is ***Justification by Believing*** which is what James specifically denied.

The problem is that such people, along with almost all others, do not understand what Paul has just said and they do not comprehend what Jesus Christ actually did on the cross. They have turned the phrase ***Justification by Faith*** on its head and made it say the very opposite of what Paul taught.

If you will recall, Paul has just affirmed in vs. 10-19 of this chapter that it is impossible for any human to even come close to what the scriptures mean by ‘believe.’

10 - none of them are righteous

11 - none of them understand and they do not seek after God

18 - there is no fear of God in their minds.

Question: *how can such a person believe?*

Everything he does is coming from a corrupt heart which would make anything he might do to be marred and corrupt in the eyes of God.

He is so corrupt that he sins by plowing his field.

Prov 21:4

4 An high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin. KJV

Some of you have a version which says “the lamp of the wicked is sin.” It is the same point. The unbeliever cannot do anything that is not sin because everything he does is out of a heart of rebellion and pride. So much for ‘good works’ getting any notice for the unbeliever at the Great Judgment!

If even the simple matters are rendered wicked by his corrupt heart how much great is the sin of seeking to interact with the Holy God on the basis of a corrupt faith coming from an ungodly heart?

He cannot be Justified by Believing, so it is certain that this is *not* what ‘**Justification by Faith**’ means.

Yet millions have been told the lie and are quite certain that they are right with God, converted, born again, on the basis of the actions of their own minds.

James 3:11-12

11 Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?

12 Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh. KJV

A bitter fountain does not send out sweet water and a fig tree does not bear olives. Neither does a corrupt heart and mind generated saving faith.

On the basis of this principle, then, the **Justification by Believing** theory is a total fraud.

We are left, then, with our original question, **What does Justification by Faith actually mean?**

The first thing you must recognize is that since writing materials and ink were incredibly expensive in Bible times the writers used a sort of ‘short-hand’ in which they would use one piece of an idea for the whole thing.

That is what Paul was doing here with ‘Justification.’ In reality, it means one specific thing, a person being found ‘not guilty’ in a court of law. But here Paul uses it as short-hand for the

whole of the saving work of God.

Rom 8:29-30

29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. KJV

It is something which we do all of the time without even realizing it. For example, when the news media says 'The White House' did something we understand that what is being referenced is the President and all of those who work directly with him.

Justification as Paul is using it in our text stands for the whole work of God by which a person comes to a right relationship with Him: election, the work of Christ (and all that it entails), calling, regeneration (which produces faith, repentance and faithful obedience) as well as God's Eternal Keeping of every one of His children. It is all condensed into ***Justification***.

We might think of it as '***Made Right With God***' because that was how he was thinking about it. A man is ***Made Right With God*** by Faith.

Before we move on, let us stop and refresh our understanding of how exactly a person is ***Made Right With God***.

It was by a very specific work that Jesus Christ did and we should be as careful to recognize that as He was to do it. We should never be sloppy as to what precisely He did for it is Amazing.

Look at these three passages together with me.

Let us read slowly and take note of some very interesting and fascinating statements.

Isa 53:4-11

4 Surely he hath ***borne*** our griefs, and ***carried*** our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

5 But ***he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.***

6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and ***the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.***

7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

8 He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt

make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: ***by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.*** KJV

2 Cor 5:21

21 For ***he hath made him to be sin for us***, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. KJV

1 Peter 2:21-24

21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:

23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:

24 ***Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree***, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. KJV

There was obviously a transference of Our Sins to Him and every sin that was transferred to Him was paid in the absolute and the one for whom the debt was paid was made Righteous in the eyes and mind of God.

This is Incredible my friend! But this is the ***Actual Means of our Justification***. This is the ***Way that it Happened!*** Every one included in this transaction will be in the New Earth eternally and every one left out has only the Lake of Fire as their destiny.

There is no way any human could create that reality by thinking or believing something in his mind.

A Legal transaction occurred. Christ died under the weight of our sins. This took care of them so far as God is concerned. It satisfied the Perfect and Eternal Justice of God.

The actual, technical reality is that we were ***Justified by the Finished Work of Jesus Christ***.

Sometimes Paul would 'short-hand' that whole work as 'The Blood.'

Rom 5:9

9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. KJV

So, one might reasonably ask, ***“are we Justified by His blood or by Faith?”***

Both statements are actually true but it is obvious that we have some thinking to do.

Eph 1:7

7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; KJV

Eph 2:13

13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. KJV

Col 1:14

14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: KJV

Col 1:20

20 And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. KJV

Heb 9:11-14

11 But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;

12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

13 For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:

14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? KJV

Heb 13:12

12 Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. KJV

See what I mean about ‘short-hand’? He did the same thing with ‘blood’ as he did with ‘Justification’ in making it represent the Entire Work of the Lord Jesus.

He did the same thing with “the cross.”

Gal 6:14

14 But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. KJV

Eph 2:14-16

14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;

15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;

16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: KJV

Col 1:19-20

- 19 For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;
20 And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. KJV

Col 2:13-14

- 13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;
14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; KJV

I am sorry if I seem to be laboring the point but I am addressing a large idea that has been pounded into all of our minds from our earliest days in church and I want you to see that I am not just making things up.

He did the same thing with the word “death.”

Rom 5:10

- 10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. KJV

So.... we are Justified by Faith.... by His Blood.... by the Cross.... and by His Death.

Understand this before we proceed further. Without the Finished Work of Christ it would not be possible for God to **Justify** us and remain Just Himself. Let me refresh your mind from our text.
Rom 3:22-26

- 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:
23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;
24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:
25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;
26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. KJV

This might be difficult for you to recognize but God remaining Just was more important that you and I being Justified.

It was God Himself Who had set the Law in place that violation of His Law would always be punishable by death. “The soul that sinneth it shall die.” Ezek 18:4, 20

- So, He would not pardon us with a Death taking place concerning our sins.

- Paul says that those who were baptized into Jesus (Union, not water baptism) were baptized into His death.

(Again)

Rom 3:26

26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. KJV

I hope this is enough and sufficient evidence to convince you that we are Justified because of the Work of Christ, carrying our sins to the Cross, shedding His Blood and Dying so that the Debt of our Sin was paid. This upheld the Justice of God even as He released us from our Guilt.

But there is a question remaining, then, isn't there? Why, if all that we just said is true, would Paul say that we are Justified by Faith?

Just as with the Work of Christ, those elements associated with believe on Jesus are described by short-hand with one piece of it standing for the whole.

But, first, the Technicalities.

The grammar, the language, that Paul used here does not say that a man is Justified 'because of' Faith but 'by the means of' Faith.

Paul said basically the same thing in slightly different word in:

Eph 2:8

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: KJV

Here he said that we are saved 'by Grace' and 'through Faith.' Again, not 'because of.' Now you may think that this is a difference without a distinction but it is not. It actually describes the method of our salvation and that is extraordinarily important.

I might illustrate this way. You get your water at your house 'by means of' the water line that is connected to it. It is 'through' that line or pipe that the water comes to you.

But you get it 'because of' a well and pumps are connected somewhere at the other end of that line.

The water line is vital. Without it there would be no water at all at your house.

But it is not the cause of the water. You do not have water because of the line. Sometimes the city cuts the water off so that repairs can be done. The line is still there but the water is not.

You get water 'by means of' and 'through' the line but not actually 'because of' it.

Faith as described in scripture is the state of Full Trust in God and through it all that comes to us from God flows.

Spiritual Life

Repentance from Sin

Forgiveness
Justification
Sanctification
Obedience
Communion with Him

Without Faith we are not connected to any of that but the Faith itself is not the Cause of any of it. The Work of Christ is.

The Whole Body of Spiritual Truth which we believe is called Faith. Paul does it in this text.

Rom 3:27

27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. KJV

Here he was comparing the Law System and all that it contained with the Faith System and all that it contained. We are saved by the Work of Christ as is explained in the System of Faith we have in our New Testament.

We cannot reduce it to the simple act of believing for the reason stated here in this verse.

If it were our Faith, our act of Believing, that Caused us to be Justified, guess what? We would have legitimate ground to take pride in what we did. We believed when others didn't and Caused our own Right Standing with God, Justification!

But Paul says that the manner of our Justification Rules Out Boasting, "it is excluded."

Whatever this thing of "**Faith**" is, when one embraces it all boasting, which is a manifestation of pride, is categorically ruled out.

But, what does it take to rule out Boasting completely and beyond all possibility?

Evidence, clear and plain, that the man had nothing whatever to do with it.

Because even if he had only a tiny part in a thing boasting would not be totally excluded.

I have heard people brag, in a very prideful manner, that they 'got saved.'

And, I have heard them tell others in that same prideful voice that they needed to 'get saved.'

I have seen young preachers cut notches in their Bibles for every person they "won to Christ."

One thing is obvious, the Faith they believed and proclaimed did not "exclude boasting."

In Paul's mind boasting is excluded because the one who has been Justified before God can take **absolutely no credit for any part** of what happened to him.

He cannot even take credit for the Faith through which he has come into relationship with God.

Eph 2:8-9

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

9 Not of works, lest any man should boast. KJV

It was a ***Gift, From God***, no boasting is legitimate.

This we know then, If anyone boasts of his part in his own Justification, Right Standing Before God, he either:

1. Does not have saving faith, or
2. Is dangerously ignorant of Sound Doctrine.

I say 'dangerous' because his gospel is not sound and he is likely to lead others into his error, maybe even to their own destruction.

In case you have not noticed, ***People preaching false doctrine are dangerous and deadly.***

Listen, there is nothing about which we can boast when it comes to our salvation. We were all lost sheep in a wilderness with neither the good sense, the inclination nor the will to find our way to the Shepherd. We were going to perish out there and that eternally.

He took pity on us and came after us, refusing to turn back until we were safely in the fold.

If we are going to boast, it should be in Him.

We were Justified, made right with God by the Complete Work of Jesus Christ, through Faith, which He gave to us in Grace so that we could be Saved. It is all of Him and none of us. We have nothing to boast of in ourselves.