

BIBLE STUDY OF ROMANS (11)

Introduction:

Paul has introduced the great doctrine of 'justification by or through faith.' This 'by or through' must not be seen as *the reason of* but the *way by which* a sinner can be justified with His holy and just God. Faith is the gifted instrument by which the sinner is united to Christ. Once united to Christ, all Christ's benefits become the sinner's while the sinner's debts and needs become Christ's.

The phrase "by faith of Jesus Christ" (vs. 22) is sometimes misunderstood. Some think it refers to Jesus' faith. But in the Greek this phrase is a 'genitive' which shows the source of this faith. *The faith of Christ* then simply means that the faith comes from Christ but at the same time, it also rests in Christ. Paraphrased Paul taught here that God's plan of making men righteous in His sight is through faith or trust in Jesus Christ rather than any works of us.

Having stated that righteousness of God is upon all those who believe (vs. 22), there is an interruption in Paul's teaching (22b-23). Perhaps Paul answers an supposed objection of a Jew who may have asked, "Paul, what of us? Though we don't share your faith in Jesus Christ, we have tried very hard to please God by means of our efforts to live in harmony with his law." Paul answered emphatically that what he wrote applies to all for we all have sinned, all come short of the glory of God and none are able to save themselves through their works. How important to continue to remind ourselves of this truth!

In vs. 24 and onward, Paul returns to the main line of teaching on justification by faith.

Notes and Comments on vs. 24-31

Vs. 24.

- being justified: *regarded and treated as if righteous – opposite of accused/condemned*

• Haldane: *Them whom God effectually calls, them He also freely justifies. Not by infusing righteousness into them but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous – not for anything wrought in them or done by them but for Christ's sake alone. Also not by imputing faith or the act of believing itself, or any other evangelical obedience, to them as their righteousness. Instead, God imputes the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them. They receive and rest on Him and His righteousness by faith. Which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God.'*

- freely by His grace: *opposed to purchased – merit – word in Greek is 'as a gift'*

- redemption: *used 10 x in NT – refers to price paid for redemption of captive – prisoner of war*

Vs. 25

- whom God has set forth: *set in public view – exhibited*

- to be a propitiation: *in Greek this word is translation of OT 'mercy-seat'*

• to propitiate means to appease an injured party, to turn aside his wrath and to make it possible for the injured or offended party to be favorable to the offending party. A propitiatory offering is an offering appointed as God's means by which His righteous wrath

against sinners is turned away. It seems that the Greek word is derived from the Hebrew "mercy-seat." Since there was a mercy-seat upon which the blood was sprinkled, therefore God is able to receive sinners who are worthy of His righteous wrath.

- through faith in His blood (of cross-death): *offering of Christ is of no avail without our faith receiving it*
- to declare: *for the purpose of showing to men*
 - what is declared: *His righteousness*
- for the remission of sins that are past
 - the OT believers were as if they were saved on 'credit' of Christ's future sacrifice
 - interestingly, God's forbearance of sins in former times, was often interpreted by sinful men as His indifference to the claims of justice (Acts 14:16; 17:30). Here that wrong view is corrected.

Vs. 26

- to declare at this time (see link w/ vs. 25) ... *God's forbearance in the past was only possible because He had in view the demonstration of His righteousness 'at this time' (Gospel day of Christ's cross)*
- that He might be just ... *the moral Governor showing due regard to the law*

vs. 27

- where is boasting then? It is excluded: *banished – shut out*
- by what law: *by what principle or on what basis?*

Vs. 28

- Paul sets before us again the two methods of being saved:

Vs. 29

- The Gospel method is for all men who share the same spiritual condition

Vs. 30

- Seeing it is one God ... *He cannot save in two ways of declaring men righteous.*

Vs. 31

- do we make void the law: *render vain – valueless – destroy its obligations?*
- God forbid: yea, we establish the law
 - the doctrine of justification by faith confirms the moral law as all its obligations are enforced, and obedience demanded. God never dropped any of His demands but made provision for it in the Cross of Christ
 - the establishing of the law is shown in three ways

(1) God showed respect to it, in being unwilling to pardon sinners without an atonement. He showed that it could not be violated with impunity; that he was resolved to fulfil its threatening.

(2) Jesus Christ came to magnify it, and to make it honourable. He showed respect to it in His life; and He died to show that God was determined to inflict its penalty.

(3) The plan of justification by faith leads to an observance of the law. The sinner sees the evil of transgression. He sees the respect which God has shown to the law. He gives his heart to God and yields himself to obey His law. All the sentiments that arise from the conviction of sin; that flow from gratitude for mercies; that spring from love to God; all his views of the sacredness of the law, prompt him to yield obedience to it. The fact that Christ endured such sufferings to show the evil of violating the law, is one of the strongest motives prompting to obedience. We do not easily and readily repeat that which overwhelms our best friends in calamity; and we are brought to hate that which inflicted such woes on the Saviour's soul.

This is an advantage in moral influence which no cold, abstract law ever has over the human mind. And one of the chief glories of the plan of salvation is, that while it justifies the sinner, it brings a new set of influences from heaven, more tender and mighty than can be drawn from any other source, to produce obedience to the law of God.

Closing quote: Barnes wrote, *I do not know better how to show the practical value and bearing of this important passage of Scripture, than by transcribing a part of the affecting experience of the poet Cowper. It is well known that before his conversion he was oppressed by a long and dreadful depression; that this was finally heightened to despair; and that he was then subjected to the kind treatment of Dr. Cotton in St. Alban's, as a sad case of derangement. His leading thought was, that he was doomed to inevitable destruction, and that there was no hope. From this he was roused only by the kindness of his brother, and by the promises of the gospel. (See Taylor's Life of Cowper.) The account of his conversion I shall now give in his own words. "The happy period, which was to shake off my fetters, and afford me a clear discovery of the free mercy of God in Christ Jesus was now arrived. I flung myself into a chair near the window, and, seeing a Bible there, ventured once more to apply to it for comfort and instruction. The first verse I saw was the 25th of the third chapter of Romans, Whom God hath set forth, etc. Immediately I received strength to believe, and the full beam of the Sun of Righteousness shone upon me. I saw the sufficiency of the atonement He had made for my pardon and justification. In a moment I believed and received the peace of the gospel. Unless the almighty Arm had been under me, I think I should have been overwhelmed with gratitude and joy. My eyes filled with tears, and my voice choked with transport. I could only look up to heaven in silent fear, overwhelmed with love and wonder. How glad should I now have been to have spent every moment in prayer and thanksgiving. I lost no opportunity of repairing to a throne of grace; but flew to it with an earnestness irresistible, and never to be satisfied."*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does God declare to us when He exhibits (set forth) Jesus as the mercy-seat? Compare Exodus 25:8, 22; 1 John 2:2 and Heb. 10:19-22.
2. God was patient in forbearing with the sins in the past. How are we to interpret God's forbearance with the sins of the nations today? 2 Peter. 3:9
3. "Peace of conscience, humility of heart and devotion of spirit are the fruits of genuine faith in God's method of justifying the believer in Jesus Christ." Why is that so true?
4. "It is so difficult to be saved because it is so easy." Is this right? If so, why?
5. Is justification by faith an experiential event in a person's life?
6. Is it always wrong to boast? Or, in other words, may we boast and if, how?
7. How does the Gospel establish the law instead of abolishing it?
8. If someone would suggest that the teaching of the complete pardon of sin simply through faith in Jesus Christ would make people live more casual or less godly, how would you counter that?