

Justification: Why Must it Be by Faith?

Romans 4:13-16

Part 2

LTS: Genesis 17:1-8

To seek the righteousness of God by law-keeping is to cancel the saving promise of God.

Please take your bibles and turn with me to Roman 4:13-16

Read Rom 4: 13-16

For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith.

For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void.

For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression. ¹⁶ That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,

He who has ears to hear, let him hear...

Being justified by his grace we become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

This morning, the centerpiece of our worship service will consist of sharing the Lord's table together, so the preaching time will be somewhat abbreviated.

You may remember from last time that Paul was teaching us why justification **MUST** be by faith and not by keeping the law. IN fact, it seemed clear to me that in this text Paul offers six reasons why justification must be by faith. Three are negative and three are positive. We covered the three negative reasons, but there just wasn't enough time to talk about the three positive reasons. So this morning I want to review just a little and then pick up where we left off, finish on time and then "land the plane" without crashing it like I did last week. So, let's talk about why justification **MUST** be by faith and not by law.

I. Why Justification must be by faith:

First of all we learned that justification must be by faith...

I. Because Law Nullifies faith:

Read (v. 14)

For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null....

Second, we learned that justification must be by faith because...

II. Law Voids God's Promise

1. Look at v. 14 again:

¹⁴ For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void.

2. Galatians 3:18 Paul wrote,

“For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise.

The third negative reason justification must be by faith...

III. The Law brings wrath:

1. Look at verse 15. The first words are, “For the law brings wrath.” Well, these are the three negative reasons why one cannot be justified in the eyes of God by keeping the law.

- Law Nullifies Grace
- Law voids Promise
- Law Brings Wrath.
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And if you missed the fuller explanation last week, feel free to download it from the website and catch up.

But Paul also offers some positive reasons for why justification must be by faith.

I. So it will be by grace:

1. Look at verse 16. Paul writes,

“That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace...”

2. Turn with me to Romans 11:6. Here Paul writes, “But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.

- A. Do you understand what he is saying? Paul is stating the obvious here. He’s saying, its either grace or its works. So don’t point to your religious works and call them call it grace. That’s Not Grace!
- B. Grace is when you get something you don’t deserve. It is when you are blessed with something good even when you deserve something bad. Grace is often referred to as unmerited favor. But by definition, if it is unmerited, then it cannot be earned.
- C. As we saw earlier, faith and works exist in opposition to one another. The one will cancel out the other.
- D. On the other hand, Faith meshes perfectly with Grace. In fact, God requires faith because He desires to bless you with grace. And the only way to receive his grace is with the empty hand of Faith.
- E. So, Justification is by faith so that it will be by grace. The second positive reason why justification must be by faith is...

II. So It Can Be Guaranteed.

1. Again (16) “So that it may rest on grace and be guaranteed...”

- A. What is a guarantee? It is a promise or assurance that certain conditions will be fulfilled. The GK word here has the idea of something being reliable, certain, or sure.
- B. Now clearly if justification is available to sinners by virtue of our law-keeping and self effort, then there is nothing sure and stable about it.
- C. When was the last time you had a truly righteous thought or did something that you thought was really pleasing to the Lord. How long did it take before you fell into unrighteousness again? Probably not very long!

- D. You see, if your justification depends on you, there can be no guarantees... except that you will break the law again and remain unjustified in God's sight.
- E. By the way, this is precisely how Roman Catholic theology portrays justification. It is NOT at all certain. When a child is born into a Roman Catholic home, he/she is considered void of grace. When that infant is baptized, however, he gets a massive infusion of grace. If that baptized baby dies, he goes to heaven. But if that person subsequently commits what they call a venial sin, he has to do penance (not repentance but penance) in order to absolved of those sins. That may involve reciting 20 "Hail Mary's" and taking the sacrament of Mass (preferably every morning). When those works are accomplished one is infused with more grace, and more grace, until they sin again, in which case the cycle starts all over again.
- F. By penance and good works, they hope to receive more and more grace.
- G. However, if your Roman Catholic friend commits a really bad sin (Adultery, murder, etc.,— what they refer to as Mortal sin - any amount of grace they may have earned by their good works, dies. They lose all grace, and they have to start all over again.
- H. In the end, however, they understand that NO amount of good world will never be enough. Every faithful Roman Catholic man or woman believes that upon death they will fall into the fires of purgatory where they will remain until all that is unholy in them is burned away.
- I. Paul's evaluation of such a scheme is found in Rom. 10:3-4.

For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.⁴
For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

- J. Beloved, there is NO security in such religion. There is no guarantee. No assurance. Nothing reliable. Nothing sure. Why? Because the whole system is about what you must do for yourself.
- K. However, if justification is rooted in the gracious heart and work of God who never changes, who chose us from before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. If he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of HIS will, to the praise of His glorious grace, then we know that our justification is guaranteed.

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.³⁰ And those

whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?³³ Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.³⁴ Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

³⁶ As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- L. Beloved, this is assurance. This is Guarantee. This is security. You don't have to guess and blindly hope that when you stand before God at the judgment, he will declare that you are justified in His sight. Why? Because He did everything necessary to ensure that you will be found right.
- M. Because our justification comes to us by God's sovereign grace, our justification is guaranteed. And that status before Him can never change.

- N. Finally, the third positive reason why our justification must be by faith is..

III. So it can be for Everyone.

1. Look with me at v. 16 once again. The second half of the verse reads, "Rom. 4:16

...that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to ALL his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all."

- A. In other words, all those who are Jewish and have believed in Jesus as their Messiah, and all the Gentiles who also believe in the Messiah. These are the sons of Abraham by faith, and heirs by faith.

- B. Abraham is the spiritual Father of all who believe. And none of those who have been justified – Jew or Gentile – are justified by adhering to the law. And frankly, the Gentiles never had the law. But that's O.K. because, when Abraham was counted righteous by God, he too was a Gentile. As we learned a couple weeks ago. He was justified by faith at least 14 years before God told him to be circumcised. And because of

that, He stands as the Spiritual Father of all who believe in Jesus, having been justified by grace alone, through faith alone, by the merits of Christ alone.

C. This morning, as we prepare to share together in the Lord's table, I plead with you to remember why sinners like you and me must be justified by faith and not by works of the law.

- Law Nullifies Grace
- Law voids Promise
- Law Brings Wrath.

And not only that, but

Justification must be by faith,

- So that it would be by grace
- So that it will be guaranteed
- And so that it can be for everyone.

Do you see why this is called "Good News?" God loves to be known as "Him who justifies the ungodly." And He would be delighted to declare you righteous in his sight this very day if you would reach out with the empty hand of faith, acknowledge that you need what he so freely offers in Christ; namely forgiveness and justification because of His righteous life and substitutionary death on the Cross, which was proven to be the work of God by His resurrection from the dead.

To seek the righteousness of God by law is to cancel the saving promise of God.