

“Justification by Faith”
Romans 1:16-17
(Preached at Trinity, February 25, 2007)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. We’ve been looking at **Verses 16-17**. As I’ve stated, they are the most important verses in the entire letter. They provide the theme – How a man or woman might be made right before God.
2. Paul began by stating: **Verse 16** – “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ”
 - A. In **Verse 15** he had stated that he was a debtor to all men. There is an obligation upon every Christian to carry the Gospel to the lost.
 - B. In the second half of **Verse 16** Paul states why he was not ashamed of the Gospel – Because it is the power of God unto salvation.
Romans 1:16 – “For it is the power of God unto salvation”
3. At the end of **Verse 16** Paul directs our attention to those to whom the Gospel is directed.
Romans 1:16 – “To the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”
 - A. On one hand this states the universal nature of the Gospel. It is directed to all men both Jews and Greeks.
 1. Paul states that the Gospel “is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. . .”
 2. All are one in Christ.
Galatians 3:28 – “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”
 - B. On the other hand, Paul is making a distinction here. He is making a statement of priority or preference directed to the Jews – “To the Jew first . . .”
 1. They were the historic chosen people of God
 2. It was to them that God sent forth His oracles – the prophets were of Israel
The promises were directed to Israel
 3. Christ and salvation came through the Jews
John 4:22 – “We worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.”
 4. Although the Jews were blessed in receiving the promises God has fulfilled His promises through the church.
4. Paul sets another parameter around salvation –
Salvation is granted “To every one that believeth”
Salvation is applied only to those who believe.
Romans 1:16 – “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”
5. Salvation is open to all men, every race, every language, and every cultural background – no matter how educated, no matter how wealthy, no matter how morally bankrupt – Only one thing will rule you out: Unbelief. Salvation is limited to only those who believe.

6. Then Paul makes a fantastic statement that is the very foundation of all Christianity. All of Christianity rests upon it. It is so important that Paul uses the next eight chapters speaking about it.
Romans 1:17 – “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”
Paul is speaking about the glorious doctrine of **Justification by Faith Alone**.
 7. This doctrine of Justification was the fuel that began the Reformation.
Martin Luther – “Sola Fide is the article upon which the church stands or falls.”
“If the article of justification is lost, all Christian doctrine is lost at the same time.”
He said of this doctrine, “It alone begets, nourishes, builds, preserves, and defends the church of God; and without it the church of God cannot exist one hour.”
 8. This Catholic monk was in great distress for his soul. Luther tried everything to find peace. He labored long and tortured himself but nothing brought relief.
Finally he was captivated by this verse – “The just shall live by faith.”
 9. It was “faith alone” that finally brought peace to Martin Luther
Luther – “I began to understand the justice of God as that by which a righteous man lives by the gift of God, namely, by faith, and this sentence ‘the justice of God is revealed in the gospel’ to be that passive justice with which the merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written: ‘The just shall live by faith.’ This straightway made me feel as though reborn and as though I had entered through open gates into Paradise itself.”
 10. This morning I want to explore this great doctrine once again. You must be clear concerning this doctrine. Your eternal soul rests upon your view of this doctrine.
- I. As we consider the doctrine of justification by faith there is a presupposition of sin
 - A. Every man stands condemned before God
 1. The issue is this: There will be a judgment. It will be a righteous judgment. We are not righteous. We will stand condemned.
 2. No flesh will stand justified before God. All are guilty
 4. Calvin: “A man is said to be justified in the sight of God when in the judgment of God he is deemed righteous, and accepted on account of his righteousness; for as iniquity is abominable to God, so neither can the sinner find grace in his sight, so far as he is and so long as he is regarded as a sinner. Hence, wherever sin is, there also are the wrath and vengeance of God. He, on the other hand, is justified who is regarded not as a sinner, but as righteous, and as such stands acquitted at the judgment seat of God, where all sinners are condemned.”
 - B. All men are born under the Law of God
 1. The Moral Law is God's everlasting standard of righteousness – the image of God's holiness.
 - a. It was written upon the heart of Adam. It continued after the fall and was written upon tablets upon Mount Sinai. The Ten Commandments are nothing more than a summary of God rule of righteousness – they are a summary of God's Word.
 - b. The Law will always be the standard by which men are judged
 2. Since all men are accountable under the Law and since all have broken it all are condemned by it. All are declared guilty
Romans 3:10 – “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:”

- C. The greatest issue of man is how shall he deal with issue of his guilt
1. He might choose to do nothing – he will live his brief life and then be cast into hell as a guilty sinner.
 2. He might choose to try doing good deeds in an effort to gain the favor of God. This is an impossibility. Our debt is too great.
Romans 3:20 – “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.”
 - a. There are no earthly resources great enough to satisfy God’s righteous judgment.
 - b. We need a righteousness that is beyond ourselves
 This is the righteousness Paul is talking about in **Verse 16**
Romans 1:17 – “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”
 - c. We need perfection – perfect righteousness – the righteousness of God. This righteousness of God is revealed in Christ

II. God has provided a perfect righteousness through Christ

- A. Jesus became unto us all that was necessary for our salvation
1 Corinthians 1:30 – “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:”
1. God is perfectly just and will execute perfect justice
 2. Jesus satisfied God’s demand for justice by taking our place. He bore the penalty for our guilt
 But we need more than a removal of our guilt – we need God’s perfect righteousness.
 3. This righteousness is the power of God unto salvation
Romans 1:16-17 – “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith. . .”
- B. Jesus has given us His righteousness
1. The nature of justification involves receiving the righteousness of another – imputed righteousness. The imputed righteousness of Christ
Romans 4:3-5 – “For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. ⁴ Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. ⁵ But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”
 - a. The word for “counted” is λογίζομαι - to reckon, to take into account, to pass to one's account, to impute
 - b. Paul is referring to Abraham’s faith in **Genesis 15:6**
Genesis 15:6 – “And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.”
 The Hebrew word here for “counted” is חָשַׁב – Like the Greek word it means “to impute, reckon, to be accounted”

2. Imputation has been described as an accounting term. The righteousness of another has been credited to our account
3. It has also been described as a legal term. We call this forensic justification. God, the righteous Judge, has condemned us. To do otherwise would be an assault upon His holy nature. God will never justify the ungodly. He has justified us, however on the basis of the righteousness of another. The righteousness of Christ has been imputed to us thus in a legal sense we are considered not guilty.
4. The glorious thing about imputed righteousness is even while we are still sinners, we are considered righteous based on the righteousness of Christ
 - a. Luther captured this with the Latin phrase:
“*simul iustus et peccator*” – “At the same time just and sinner”
 - b. It does not affect the *condition* of the sinner but the *state* of the sinner in which he is declared righteous through the righteousness of Christ.
5. It is not a process of renewal but a once for all time act whereby his guilt is removed.

III. How does one receive such a blessing?

A. Here we find the wonder and mystery of salvation

1. On one hand it is all of God
 - a. God applies His justifying grace to the sinner through saving faith
Galatians 2:16 – “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”
 - b. God convinces the sinner of his sin and then imparts the faith necessary for him to embrace the salvation of Christ.
Ephesians 2:8 – “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God.”
Romans 1:17 – “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”
 - c. It is grace, a gift from God – “and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God.”
2. On the other hand every man is commanded to repent and believe the Gospel – all are responsible for their own soul.
^{KJV} **Romans 1:5** – “By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name.”
^{NAS} **Romans 1:5** – “through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about *the* obedience of faith among all the Gentiles, for His name's sake,”
 - a. **Romans 1:17** – “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith”
Literally “By faith to faith”
The righteousness of God is revealed by faith to those who believe.

- b. What must we do to be saved? “Believe.” So then does this belief save us? No! Christ saves us. Faith is the means by which the righteousness of Christ is applied to us.
 - c. This faith is a full standing upon the promises of God through Christ Jesus. It is all a part of God’s work of redeeming His own. We must be clear that it is God who enables us to believe.
 - d. Justification comes by faith but we must be careful that we do not make faith a work.
- B. Faith is supernaturally introduced into the soul by the sovereign grace of God – but all men have the duty to believe
- 1. The Gospel demands that we trust in Christ alone. Our only hope is in His righteousness. We have NONE of our own. The only righteousness that will justify us before God is the righteousness of Christ.
 - 2. The salvation of sinners is the powerful work of God
Romans 1:16 – “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth”

Conclusion:

- 1. Those who trust in Christ have the righteousness of Christ – the righteousness that is restores us to God, the righteousness that brings life.
Romans 1:17 – “The just shall live by faith.”
Following the word order of the original it reads, “The just (or righteous) by faith shall live”
- 2. This was the passage the brought hope and confidence to Martin Luther. He was brought to the peace that he no longer had to struggle to make himself right before God through the keeping of the law. No one can meet this standard. Instead he could rest in the One who did keep the Law – the perfect Son of God – the Righteousness of God revealed.
- 3. Upon what do you rest for your salvation? Where does your assurance rest?
- 4. If you have not trusted in Christ upon what do you place your hope?
Acts 16:31 – “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved”
- 5. One final thing. God has saved us unto holiness. Those to whom He has imputed righteousness He also imparts righteousness.
In other words, Justification is never separated from Sanctification.
Ephesians 2:8 – “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. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”
- 6. God is continuing to perfect us.
Philippians 1:6 – “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ:”