

10. Learning What Justification Means

In our last topic, we saw the summary of the first three chapters of the book of Romans. In that summary, we saw that every person is guilty before God because all have sinned. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand and be able to explain why all people are guilty before God. In our topic today, we are going to see that once people understand that they are guilty before God then we can begin to explain to them how to be made right with God. We begin by helping them to understand what justification means.

Romans 3:21-22a says, “But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe.” We have seen that the law shows that every person has sinned and is guilty before God. That means that the law cannot show the righteousness of God. Instead, the righteousness of God has to be revealed in some other way. However, God does show us that He is righteous because He has no sin. The righteousness of God is revealed throughout the Law and the Prophets in the Old Testament.

In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses wrote a song that includes a strong statement about the righteousness of God. Deuteronomy 32:4 says, “*He is the Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice, A God of truth and without injustice; Righteous and upright is He.*” God is the solid Rock that will always stand. The reason why this is true is due to the fact that all of His works are perfect. All of the ways of God are just and right. God is a God of truth. There is no injustice in any of the works of God. God is the One who is Righteous. God is the One who is upright. Throughout the Old Testament, we see that all of the works of God are just and right.

God chose to make that righteousness available to every person who would place their faith in Christ and the payment that He made for our sin on the cross. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, “For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” In this verse, we see that God placed all of our sins on Christ as Christ hung on the cross. In fact, for three hours there was darkness over the whole land because God cannot look on sin with favor. Mark 15:34 says, “And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?’ which is translated, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’” God is righteous and had to forsake Christ during the time that our sin was placed on Him. That is what made it possible for the Father to place the righteousness of Christ on us at the moment that we placed our faith in Christ.

Romans 3:22b-26 says, “For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth *as* a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” There is no difference between one person and another because one has committed many sins and another fewer sins. The key thing is that all have sinned and because of that sin all have come short of the glory of God.

That is why it was necessary for the Father to be able to declare us righteous by His grace and not through our works. The Father is able to declare us righteous because of the fact that we were redeemed by Christ. Redemption has three parts. Christ bought us back from the penalty of sin. Second, Christ set us free. Third, Christ removed us from further sale so that we could not be sold back into the bondage of sin again. The word “propitiation” means *that which satisfies*. The form of the word that is used here is only used one other place in the New Testament. Hebrews 9:5 says, “And above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.” In this verse, it is translated “mercy seat”. In the Old Testament, the high priest once a year placed blood on the mercy seat first as a covering for his own sins and then more blood as a covering for the sins of the people. Christ presented His blood to the Father and His blood took away sin once for all instead of just covering sin. That is why our sins were blotted out at the moment that we placed our faith in Christ.

The Father demonstrated His righteousness by accepting the blood of Christ as the payment for our sin. The forbearance of God meant that God could wait to judge the sins of those who came to God by faith in the Old Testament. God demonstrated His righteousness by waiting until Christ had paid the penalty for sin by His blood before God judged the sin of those who had shown faith in God in the Old Testament. At the present time, God demonstrates His righteousness by accepting and being satisfied with the payment that Christ has already made for our sins. As a result, God is just. That means that the penalty for sin must be paid. God is able to accept the payment by Christ for our sin and in our place when we place our faith in Christ. God also declares us justified or made righteous because He places the righteousness of Christ on us at the moment that we place our faith in Christ.

Romans 3:27-28 says, “Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.” Here, we see that no Christian can boast about the salvation he has received, because it is based entirely on what Christ and the Father have chosen to do. Not a single person can boast and say that he or she has kept the law of God. Not a single person can say that they have worked to earn their salvation. Boasting is totally excluded. Instead of being saved by keeping the law or by good works, we must be saved totally by faith. In fact, Ephesians 2:8-9 says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” Here, we see that even our faith to believe was given to us as a gift by God.

This means that we are justified or declared righteous in the sight of God totally apart from the law or anything that we might do. We want to help our children clearly understand what this means so that they can explain to others that our salvation is totally by faith. Neither keeping the law nor trying to do good works had anything to do with our salvation. We can only come to the conclusion that we are saved by faith and that the works of the law had nothing to do with that salvation.

That is why Romans 3:29-31 says, “Or *is He* the God of the Jews only? *Is He* not also the God of

the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, since *there is* one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.” The fact that salvation is totally by faith means that God is the God of both the Jews and the Gentiles. All people who come to God must come to God by faith in Christ and the sacrifice that He made for our sin and in our place.

The law included circumcision for the Jews. However, all Jews must come to the Father through Christ by faith. Those of us who are Gentiles also come to the Father through faith in Christ. God declares both Jews and Gentiles righteous because of faith and not through the law. This immediately raises a very important question. Does the law have any purpose? The answer to that question is given in Galatians 3:24-25 where we read, “Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.” In these verses, we see that the law had a very great purpose. The law was what showed that everyone was guilty before God and needed to come to God by faith in Christ. A key thing to remember about any law is that the law in itself does not make people do what is right. Instead, the law shows when people have done wrong.

We see that we do not make the law void through faith. Instead, we see that we establish the law. This is explained in more detail in Romans 8:3-4 where we read, “For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God *did* by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” The law shows instead why it was necessary for the Father to send Christ to pay the penalty for sin. Christ became a man and lived among us. In all three areas where Adam and Eve failed and sinned, Christ was victorious over sin. When Satan tempted Adam and Eve with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, Adam and Eve sinned. When Satan tempted Christ in these same three areas, Christ answered Satan each time from the Word of God.

As Christians, we no longer walk in the flesh and try to keep the law in our own strength. Instead we walk according to the Spirit. As we yield our human spirit to the Holy Spirit, the Lord gives us His strength so that we do not carry out the lusts of the flesh. As we help both our physical and spiritual children to understand these key principles, we are helping them to understand why it is important for them to learn to yield their human spirit to the Holy Spirit so that they can walk in the Spirit. We are also equipping them to help others so that other Christians can also learn to walk in the Spirit. As people learn to walk in the Spirit, their lives will begin to bear the fruit of the Spirit given in Galatians 5:22-23. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to understand what justification means to them in their own lives and in their ministry.