

RIGHTEOUSNESS THROUGH FAITH - PART II

Romans 3:24-31

We are justified without a cause. Romans 3:24-26 says:

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."

Note the word "freely" in Romans 3:24, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:". In the greek, the word is dorean which literally means "gratuitously." It is translated as "freely", "without a cause", and "for naught" in other passages of scripture.

The basic thrust of the word makes it clear that there was no outside reason for God to justify those who believed in Christ. Nothing you can do can ever force God to justify you; He does it of His own free choice. It is grace. Your faith is not what saves you, so you don't have to worry if your faith seems weak. Your faith too is a gift from God. Your faith is given to you by God's grace. It is God's grace that saves you!

Ephesians 2:8 says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is a gift of God:" ((Emphasis mine)).

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If you were in prison and sentenced to be executed, and the Governor sent you a pardon, it would be the pardon that saved you, not your acceptance of it. It is true that you could thwart the pardon's purpose. You could refuse to believe it and refuse to accept it and go to your execution in your own stubborn way.

But ... if you did as most people would do in a similar situation ... if you gladly reached out and, believing, accepted the free pardon that the Governor was offering you ... it would still be the pardon that saved you, not your acceptance.

You could "believe in" the Governor all you wanted, but it wouldn't do any good unless he chose to send you the pardon.

So it is with God's grace. It is His free gift of grace that saves you. He wants you to believe Him. He wants you to reach out in faith and accept His free gift of grace. And, you can stubbornly refuse it and thwart His grace in your case. But, if you do accept His gift in faith, it is still His grace that does the saving!

To "justify" is to declare righteous. If you have accepted Jesus Christ as your savior; if you have believed God and reached out in faith to accept His free gift of grace; then you have been declared righteous.

The source of man's righteousness is in the sinful nature and being of man. But the righteousness of God has its source in the nature and being of God. And, you have God's righteousness if you have come to Him in His way!

Think of it! God has declared that you are righteous. Think about that. Sure, God has forgiven your sins. That is true and it is important, but it's only one part of the gift that God has bestowed upon those who believe. The entire gift is much greater than that one part.

It is not only that your sins have been forgiven: it is also that you have been declared righteous. You may not feel very righteous. I know that I don't. I know that I am still burdened by my sinful nature and that the flesh wars against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh.

In fact, if I were to allow my feelings to rule, I would be among men quite possibly the most miserable because I know what perfection is and how far short of it I continually fall. Glory be to God that my salvation does not depend upon how I feel but rather depends upon God's promises.

Despite how I see myself, I nevertheless stand upon God's promise that He has justified me, that He has declared me to be righteous, and that when He looks at me, He sees the perfection of Christ in which He has cloaked me.

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Romans 3:27 says:

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

All phases of human religion have an element of human pride. God's plan of salvation has no place for human pride:

It is based on believing, not on achieving.

Man is almost incurably addicted to the principle of doing something towards his own salvation. The fact that no man has ever succeeded in doing it does not seem to deter him from continuing to try.

When man thinks that he can do something to bring himself nearer to God, he is thereby confessing his unawareness of his true distance from God. And when he thinks that God could be satisfied by something that comes from the human heart, he is showing that he cannot comprehend the true holiness of God.

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One of the simplest of the lessons of geography is that altitude has no connection with latitude or longitude. I grew up in California where there are some of the widest variations of altitude that can be found in this country.

Within a few miles of each other are points that are well below sea level, and other points that are the highest in the contiguous forty-eight United States.

Suppose a man were living down in the Salton Sea region, northeast of San Diego, which is well below sea level. Suppose he wanted to leave California and said to himself, "I will go northwest to Carmel on Monterey Bay, just south of San Francisco, and there I will no longer be below sea level."

But we inform him at once that although he has come up to the level of the sea, he is still in California. "Well then," he replies, "I'm heading for the top of Mount Whitney out east of Fresno which has an elevation of 14,494 feet. I'm sure you'll admit that I'll then be on the highest ground around."

Sure we agree, but we nevertheless maintain that he is still in California. Even a child in the first grade can understand that you can't climb your way out of California. You have to go out, not up!

It is true that if you go up far enough, you're out of California and into outer space, but you can't do that on your own: you need a spacecraft. Under your own foot power, you can't make it out of California by going up.

Now, the Bible teaches expressly that all men are born into the country of "death." Some gravitate to prison, skid row, and other locations far below the level of common decency.

Others are far better than these and have reached a respectable attitude. Still others reach the great heights of the finest in human morality and achievement. But they are all, together, still in the country of "death".

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Romans 3:28 says:

28. "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."

When God moves to save an individual, He does not lift him to a better life, but takes him out of death and into life. And the new life is not merely a better life, but is rather an absolutely new and different life.

I recently read a story about a Bavarian wood carver who saw a piece of wood in the mouth of a sack of grain. The wood was the precise color of the grain. The man took the wood and began to carve imitation grains of wheat. Finally he had a small handful of them and, mixing them with the real grain, defied his friends to tell them apart.

In fact, his artistry had been so fine that he, himself, was not able to tell the natural from the artificial. Ultimately, the only way to tell the two apart was to put them in water for a day or two. The live grains of wheat sprouted. The ones that had been carved remained exactly what they were - dead imitations.

God has created life within the hearts of those who have been born again. Some men imitate that life. But the day is coming when the difference will be made clear by the gaze of God who knows true from false.

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Romans 3:29-31 says:

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."

Faith does not destroy the law. In fact, it is only through faith that we are really able to fulfill the law. Those who try to work their way into Heaven by keeping the law are forever doomed to failure. But those who are resting in faith on Jesus are given the power to keep God's law. It is only those who trust in Jesus that are able to obey God's law.

I'm not talking about the so-called faith of many who just come to church and say, "Yes. I believe. I believe." I'm talking about those who really lean their whole weight on God and trust Him to hold them up and keep them in His will.

The story is told of a little church in a small farming community that had been suffering under a drought. The congregation met to pray for rain. But, when the time came to open the prayer meeting, the preacher stood up and looked severely at his flock and exclaimed, "You all know why we're here! Now, what I want to know is - WHERE ARE YOUR UMBRELLAS?"

Lean your whole weight upon God! Trust Him to save you and provide for you!

A mother and her little four year old daughter were preparing to retire for the night. The child was afraid of the dark, and the mother, on this occasion alone with the child, felt fearful also. When the light was out, the child caught a glimpse of the moon outside the window. "Mother," she asked, "is the moon God's light?" "yes." said the mother. The next question was, "Will God put out His light and go to sleep?" The mother replied, "No, my child. God never goes to sleep." Then out of a simplicity of a child's faith, she said that which gave reassurance to the fearful mother, "Well, as long as God is awake, there is no sense both of us staying awake."

As long as God is awake, we don't need to worry. He watches over us. Nothing can happen to us without His permission! Lean your whole weight upon God! Trust Him for everything!

Hallelujah! Amen!

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