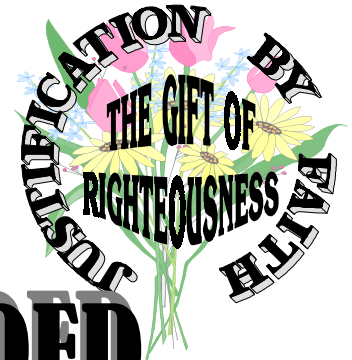




## The Epistle to the Romans

Lesson Number 11



# BOASTING IS EXCLUDED

<sup>3:27</sup> Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. <sup>28</sup> Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. <sup>29</sup> Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, <sup>30</sup> since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. <sup>31</sup> Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law. (Romans 3:27-31<sup>NKJV</sup>)

## INTRODUCTION

### LESSON OUTLINE

- I. THE EXCLUSION OF BOASTING (3:27a)
- II. THE BASIS FOR ITS EXCLUSION (3:27ba)
- III. THE CONCLUSION OF FAITH (3:28)
- IV. THE GOD OF ALL WHO BELIEVE (3:29)
- V. ONE BASIS FOR JUSTIFICATION (3:30)
- VI. DO WE MAKE VOID THE LAW? (3:31a)
- VII. WE ESTABLISH THE LAW (3:31b)

The Spirit has presented penetrating proof of man's need for a righteousness from God. Not only does he utterly lack one of his own, he is absolutely incapable of developing one. Sin, having entered the

world through Adam, has so infected mankind, that outside of the Lord's intervention, there is no hope of surviving the day of judgment.

Because Christ's death has touched the heart of God, a grand message of deliverance is now brought to all the world. It is the Gospel of Christ, characterized as *"the power of God unto salvation."* Regardless of the objections of religious sophists, this Gospel is essential for the completion of the work God has begun in us. At no point does the believer move beyond his need to hear the good news of Christ Jesus. Those who imagine that personal, domestic, and social concerns are of more importance to the believer than the Gospel have only confirmed their ignorance.

Spiritual life cannot be initiated or maintained independently of the Gospel. The reason for this should be apparent. We still must contend with the carnal

nature, even though it has been circumcised from us by Jesus (Col 2:11-12). As long as that condition exists, the Gospel must be declared and expounded. Commensurate with the neglect of the Gospel, the flesh begins to gain strength, and will soon draw men away from the very God they once embraced through Christ Jesus.

Early in the history of the church, men were drawn aside into vain jangling over the law and the meaning of words. As soon as that circumstance arose, the church began to lose its power, experience division, and hold back the truth of God. Humanly developed theologies took the place of the Gospel, as men were vaunted above the Most High God.

Throughout this book, we will find the most precisely defined theology in the world is the Gospel of Christ. In that Gospel God Himself is revealed, as well as the nature of man. What man needs is

defined, and the provision of it by God is announced. Apart from the Gospel, neither man nor God can be fully comprehended. Furthermore, it is only to the degree that the Gospel is believed and embraced that understanding becomes valid. If the Gospel is not comprehended, God cannot be known. If it is not believed, a distorted view of man will also result.

I am aware that these are bold assertions, yet they need to be made. When men treat the church as though it were central, majoring on its form, patterns, and organization, a serious departure from the Gospel has occurred. Those who choose to emphasize other matters related to man have been swept up in the same departure.

Men are not at liberty to choose an emphasis differing from God's stress. Throughout the Scriptures, from beginning to end, the Lord has placed the accent upon Jesus. The destiny of all men hinges upon the Son of God. All authority in heaven and earth has been given to Him, and He alone is charged with bringing many sons to glory (Heb 2:10). All of this is resident in the Gospel of Christ, and must not be withheld from men.

#### RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD

From early times, men have been prone to systematize the things of God. Thinking this enables men to more readily take hold of them, all sorts of regimented thought is being purveyed in the name of Christ. Each denomination has its line of reasoning that enables them to remain distinct from other believers. These systems of thought are often equated with the Word of God itself.

Teachers of the Word are solemnly told to "*rightly divide the word of truth,*" handling it properly (2 Tim 2:15). They are to apportion it with an interest in convicting sinners and edifying saints. They are not to give meat to babies or milk to men. They are not purveyors of information, but ambassadors of Jesus. Their message is not that of a church or denominational line of reasoning, but of Jesus Himself.

In the dispensing of the Word, the Gospel is the melody—the prominent part. It is portrayed in the tabernacle service and sacrificial system of the Law. It was prophesied by the Prophets, announced by Jesus, and expounded by the Apostles. The Gospel of Christ is prominent in every Epistle. It is the foundation for spiritual reasoning and the basis for godly appeals. It makes sin unreasonable and

that Gospel. This is what made Paul such an effective laborer in the Kingdom. He ministered with a lively sense of the truth of the Gospel upon his spirit.

All of the Epistles are actually a preaching and exposition of the Gospel of Christ. No Gospel or Epistle is written in memory of a mere man. Nor, indeed, are any of them addressed exclusively to alien

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righteousness sensible.

In this world, the proclamation of the Gospel is sandwiched between two great events. (1) The entrance of sin into the world. (2) Man's ultimate confrontation of God and Jesus themselves. As soon as sin entered, the Gospel was announced in embryo (Gen 3:15). And, only the Gospel of Christ prepares men to stand before God. No amount of human discipline or learning can accomplish that preparation independently of the Gospel. A sparse Gospel results in a feeble hope. Spiritual advance requires hearing the Gospel.

#### REASONING ON THE FACTS

In the first chapter of this marvelous Epistle, Paul referred to himself as one who served God "*with my spirit in the gospel of his Son*" (1:9). **The Gospel is a framework in which acceptable service, or worship, is rendered to God.** While it is true that Paul majored on preaching this Gospel, He also enveloped his own conscience with a lively sense of the reality and implications of

sinners. That singular circumstance is arresting to ponder. It confirms that men must hear the Gospel throughout their lives in order to proper advance in the kingdom of God.

The Gospel produces a lively sense of our need of a righteousness from God. It also keeps us apprized that such a righteousness can be had through faith. Nothing is as effective in these matters as hearing the Gospel of God's Son. That is precisely why it is the theme of inspired writing. The testimony of Jesus is, as it is written, "*the spirit of prophecy*" (Rev 19:10).

Our text will now proclaim the inferences of the doctrine of man's sinfulness and need of a righteousness from God. An inference, in this case, is an inspired conclusion. It is a spiritual deduction. It is not a human opinion, but a Divine revelation. Once, however, the Gospel is heartily embraced, these inferences become apparent, and are accepted by the believer. They become a motive for acceptable behavior.

## THE EXCLUSION OF BOASTING

<sup>3:27a</sup> **Where is boasting then? It is excluded.** There is an undeniable tendency in flesh to rob God of His glory. From assuming too much of self (Gal 6:3) to trusting in horses and chariots (Psa 20:7), the proneness to live as though there were no God is found throughout humanity. With great power, the first three chapters of Romans have thrown down such reasoning. The universal dominance of sin has confirmed the fall of man and his need of a righteousness from God. This is not, however, apparent to all.

Divine sensitivity to the boasting of humanity is plainly declared in Scripture. Although there is a marked tendency in men to boast in their achievements, God will not allow it! One of the marks of fallen humanity is that they became *“boastful”* (Rom 1:30). It is the tongue, noted for its wickedness, that *“makes great boasts”*<sup>NIV</sup> (James 3:5). As James would say, *“All such boasting is evil”* (James 4:16). The only valid boasting is boasting *“in the Lord”* (2 Cor 10:17).

Let us hear the conclusion of the matter. *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast”*<sup>NIV</sup> (Eph 2:9-10). Salvation is designed so that it excludes boasting--glorying in human achievement. Wherever this practice exists, at the best, salvation has been neglected, and at the worst, it is not present! It makes little difference what claims are made.

Boasting in something other than the Lord is altogether too common in the professed church. The Gospel, however, does not allow for such boasting. The Gospel announces that *“God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing*

*the things that are, THAT NO FLESH SHOULD GLORY IN HIS PRESENCE”*<sup>NKJV</sup> (1 Cor 1:27-29). That is another way of saying boasting *“is excluded.”*

### Where Is Boasting?

Other versions read, *“Then what becomes of our boasting?”*<sup>NASB</sup> *“So what*

**Glorying in such things as wisdom, might, and riches involves trusting in them, as well as taking credit for the development of them. Life is lived relying upon these things instead of upon the Lord. Though popular, this is a condition that grieves the Lord.**

*becomes of our boasts?”*<sup>NJB</sup> *“Can we boast, then?”*<sup>NLT</sup>

What is *“boasting?”* And why is it *“excluded,”* or not allowed. The word *“boast”* means to glory or rejoice in something. In our text, such boasting is in human achievement or accomplishment. Boasting springs from a frame of mind that supposes Divine requirements have been fulfilled by mere human effort. It presupposes the dominance of self, and takes no account of Divine working.

### The Rich Young Ruler

An example of such boasting is found in the rich young ruler’s response to Christ’s word to *“keep the commandments”* (Matt 19:17). The young man replied, *“All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?”* That was boasting, and it is not allowed. He had not been as complete in his obedience as he supposed, for *“all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”* Although Jesus was attracted to this young man, loving him, yet He faced him with a requirement flesh could not keep. *“One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the*

*poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me”* (Mk 10:21).

### The Pharisee Who Prayed with Himself

Jesus once spoke a parable *“to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.”* It provides an excellent example of boasting. *“Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess”* (Luke 18:9-12).

All such boasting is *“excluded.”* There is no place for it in the Kingdom of God. If men have actually done the will of God, *“it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure”* (Phil 2:13). It is His power that is at work in us (Eph 3:20). Jesus once said, *“The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works”* (John 14:10). If this was true of Him, how much more is it true of those who are in Him. Boasting is excluded!

### A Divine Mandate

The matter of boasting in anything other than God is strictly forbidden. The Spirit declared this through Jeremiah in very clear words. *“Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD”* (Jer 9:23-24). Glorying in such things as wisdom, might, and riches involves trusting in them, as well as taking credit for the development of them. Life is lived relying upon these things instead of upon

the Lord. Though popular, this is a condition that grieves the Lord.

**Glory Not In Man**

Another form of boasting is glorying in man. This is altogether too common in our day. The Word of the Lord speaks with remarkable clarity to this subject. *“Therefore let no man glory [same word as “boast”] in men. For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s”*(1 Cor 3:21-23). If God gives us “all

*things,”* how foolish to boast in them instead of the God who gave them! Such boasting betrays spiritual blindness, and must be repented of with dispatch.

**CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

It is ironic that *“true religion”* should make people humble, compelling them to keep unspotted from the world, and visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction (James 1:27). Yet, it has become the ground for fleshly boasting throughout the world. Men glory in their religious achievements, creeds, and heritage, isolating themselves from other

believers, and claiming uniqueness upon the basis of these things.

But when it comes to the matter of acceptance with God, and the appropriation of his righteousness, boasting is excluded. It is NOT allowed. There is no place for it, no quadrant of the Kingdom where it is in order.

The blessing is to the *“poor in spirit,”* who are in possession of the Kingdom of heaven (Matt 5:3). That stands in stark contrast with boasting, which is *“excluded.”*

**THE BASIS FOR ITS EXCLUSION**

*“<sup>27b</sup> By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith.”* The Spirit is not content to merely state the reality. He will expound it to us, in order that we may grasp it with our hearts and minds. It is never enough to simply learn to repeat the truth, although that is imperative. It is also essential to love and perceive it. It is the perception of the truth that enables us to love and obey it.

What law, or principle, dictates the exclusion of boasting? The words of our text are easy enough to grasp with the intellect. *“Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith”* (Rom 3:27). That is not a difficult sentence to diagram, nor are the words hard to research.

**EVERY REALM HAS LAWS**

Every realm has inviolable laws; principles that cannot be contradicted. The domain of our earth has general laws. There are varying laws in the firmament, and in the depths of the sea. These are all laws that have nothing whatsoever to do with the human will. They stand firm, and cannot be shaken. These are not moral laws, to be kept or broken, but laws that cannot be broken. They, like the Word of God, stand in tact, and cannot be altered or changed (John 10:35). Neither can they be ignored with impunity.

The laws we will now address are in

the spiritual domain. They too cannot be altered by men.

**DIFFERENT REALMS, DIFFERENT LAWS**

In the natural realm, for example, we have the law of gravity. When you deal with matter, or substance, this law dominates. It will not serve you unless you honor it. It will harm you if you ignore it. When anything of weight is thrown into the air, it will eventually come down!

**It is never enough to simply learn to repeat the truth, although that is imperative. It is also essential to love and perceive it. It is the perception of the truth that enables us to love and obey it.**

When you spin something at a high rate of speed, unattached things will be forced to the outside. That is the law of centrifugal force. Water, wind, fire--they all function according to inviolable laws, or principles. If you expect these forces to serve you, those laws must be respected. Certain laws must be honored in all valid sciences, i.e., chemistry, physics, biology, etc.

**A SUPERIOR LAW**

Boasting has been excluded on the

basis of a law--a superior law! Hear the text again. *“Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith.”* Notice that two contrary laws are mentioned, *“works”* and *“faith.”* It is significant that these are contrasted. There are whole bodies of theology that have attempted to put them together in a way not intended by God.

There is a sense in which *“faith”* and *“works”* are brought together. There is the *“work of faith”* (1 Thess 1:3; 2 Thess 1:11). In that case, however, faith itself is the *“work.”* James also spoke of *“works”* being the indispensable evidence of faith (James 2:14-26).

However, when it comes to being extricated from bondage to sin and receiving God’s righteousness, *“faith”* and *“works”* are opposing laws. They are contrasted with one another in our text. Additionally, Romans 9:31-32 puts them in opposition to each other. *“Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone.”* Galatians 2:16 presents the same contrast. *“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*

*The imputation of the righteousness of God by faith excludes all boasting in the flesh, by Given O. Blakely*

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." Galatians 3:2,5 also contrasts faith and works. "This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? . . . He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?"

Our text brings us into a higher realm. We cannot shun the reality of the contrast determined by the Holy Spirit.

### THE CAUSE OF JUSTIFICATION

This text addresses the cause of our justification--why God gives us His righteousness. He does not give it to us upon the basis of our works, but because of faith. NOT works, but faith.

### THE LAW OF WORKS

What is the law "of works?" In the words of Scripture, it is this: "The man who does these things will live by them" (Rom 10:5, NASB). In the words of Levitical law, "Keep my decrees and laws, for the man who obeys them will live by them. I am the LORD" (Lev 18:5). This is the law, or principle, upon which the majority of professed Christendom appears to operate. Discipline, achievement, accountability, responsibility--these are all bywords under "the law of works."

The Law commanded works, not faith (Gal 3:12)! It offered life for doing, not believing.

Even if the individual could achieve a good degree of success under this "law," he still could not stand faultless before the Lord. Paul cites Abraham as an example of this truth. "If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about--but not before God" (Rom 4:2). God will not be beholden to men for their deeds! It is not that He refuses to recognize flawless obedience, it is that there is no such thing! And even if this condition did exist, it is not enough to constitute one "righteous" in the sense of our text. In the words of Jesus, "So you

that he had kept the commandments "from his youth up" (Matt 19:20). This was only an imagination, but he thought it was right. The Pharisee bragged about his achievements in a supposed prayer to God. "God, I thank you that I am not like other men--robbers, evildoers, adulterers--or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get" (Luke 18:11-12).

See, the law of works did not exclude boasting, it encouraged it! It is human nature [another word for fallen nature] to

**Works open the door for boasting, they do not close it! The rich young ruler boasted that he had kept the commandments "from his youth up" (Matt 19:20). This was only an imagination, but he thought it was right. The Pharisee bragged about his achievements in a supposed prayer to God.**

also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty'" (Luke 17:10, NIV). The fact that men had to be told, or commanded, to do it proves they are unrighteous!

But our text says boasting is "excluded." It is not excluded by the law of works. If, in fact, a person did all he was commanded to do, he would boast. Works open the door for boasting, they do not close it! The rich young ruler boasted

boast in supposed achievement.

That is the "pride of life" that belongs to the worldly order, and is not of God (1 John 2:15-17). Boasting has more to do with "confidence in the flesh" (Phil 3:3) than merely bragging externally. It is a condition of soul that finds the individual resting in, and depending upon, the "natural man." Such a condition does not require faith, the Lord Jesus, or the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. That is why it is so sinful.

## THE LAW OF FAITH

### THE LAW OF FAITH IS DIFFERENT

The "law of faith" differs significantly from the "law of works." It will not allow such boasting. It is as though faith had its own law, which refuses to place meritorious value on any works wrought by men. Hear Paul express this law. "But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all:

yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1 Cor 15:10). Although he was a prodigious laborer, Paul refused to give credit to himself. He traced his accomplishments back to the grace of God, not self-effort.

Here was a man of remarkable discipline and spiritual achievement. There is not a believer in history that does not acknowledge Paul excelled the rest of

our race. Yet when he spoke of his life, he spoke of "the law of faith," not the "law of works." "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20).

Faith achieves in men what God desires. It acknowledges sin, trusts in Christ Jesus, and receives God's

righteousness. It is superior to every other expression or response of men! Believing God (not merely believing there is a God) **always** produces a "good report" (Heb 11:2). No one is ever put at a disadvantage for believing God. Nor, indeed, is it possible to gain any true advantage while not believing God.

### FAITH IS GREATER THAN REASON

Reason is a marvelous faculty possessed by mankind. It sets humanity apart from the rest of creation. Made in the image of God, man can think, ponder, plan, and choose. He has a capacity to understand or comprehend.

However, reason cannot find God, or discern Him as He wants to be discerned. Zophar was correct in his observation, even though he applied it wrongly to Job: "Can you discover the depths of God? Can you discover the limits of the Almighty?" (Job 11:7). Solomon confirmed the observation. "Man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end" (Eccl 3:11). And again "Man cannot discover the work which has been done under the sun. Even though man should seek laboriously, **he will not discover**; and though the wise man should say, 'I know,' **he cannot discover**"<sup>NASB</sup> (Eccl 8:17). **And that was God's work "under the sun," to say nothing of His infinitely greater redemptive work in His Son!**

Time would fail us to elaborate on the inferiority of reason. Apart from Christ, and at its natural apex, it is "foolishness with God" (1 Cor 3:19). With all of man's purported wisdom and learning, it is still true-- "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Cor 2:9). But this is not the case with faith!

### The Example of Abraham

When there is no earthly reason for believing, faith can still lay hold of the promises of God. **The law of faith is transcendent to the limited law of reason.** That is why it is said of our father Abraham, "Against all hope [with no natural reason for hope], Abraham in

*hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, 'So shall your offspring be.' Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead--since he was about a hundred years old--and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God" (Rom 4:18-20, NIV).*

Mere human reason would have pointed to the age of Abraham and concluded the promise was not possible. It would have pondered the womb of Sarah and determined that what was promised could not come to pass.

**Abraham did not resort to reason, but to faith!** The law of faith does not require evidence, but a promise! It can rise higher than reason, see more

**The truth of the matter is that most of us must carry difficult burdens--burdens we had rather not experience. But this is no handicap to faith, and thus is no real impairment to you!**

than the naked eye, and reach further than logic! It rests in God, not in the attestation of the senses, or the confirmation of human logic.

**Faith is willing to risk everything on the Word of the Lord!** It sees the superiority of God to apparently impossible circumstances. It may not look possible for a nation to walk through the Red Sea, but if God tells them to do it, they can (Ex 14:15-16)! It may not look reasonable for rivers of water to come out of a wilderness rock, but if God says they will, the people can prepare to drink (Ex 17:6)! It may violate the rules of astronomy and reason to think the sun can stand still, but if God tells Joshua to command it to happen, he will proceed (Josh 10:12-13). Faith sees the word and will of God as supreme.

Faith is superior to reason! In its presence logic shrinks and swivels! This is because faith rests in God and His unquestionable power! Those who shine the light upon the human capacity to reason do us no service! It was human reason that brought our race down (Gen 3:6)! It was reason that led Israel to fear taking the promised land (Num 13:31-33). From the human point of view, it was reason that provoked the high priest and Jewish leaders to demand Christ's crucifixion (John 11:49-50).

This does not mean faith is unreasonable--God forbid! It does mean that **faith lifts us to a higher plain of reason**--one that is related more to Deity than humanity. The "law of faith" is superior to reason, however, in every way. It brings great advantage and blessing.

### FAITH IS SUPERIOR TO EMOTION

Human emotion is not to be trusted. It is something that can be a blessing or a curse. It can move David to leap and dance in praise to God (2 Sam 6:14). It can also constrain Esau to sell his birthright for a single meal (Heb 12:16). Emotion is more soulish than spiritual. It is a slave that must be governed by a higher principle.

Faith towers over emotion, or human feelings. When Abraham obediently goes to offer Isaac, his emotion is tempted by a probing question from Isaac. "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" (Gen 22:7). How the question must have wrenched the soul of the patriarch. It was a temptation to draw back from obeying the word of the Lord. He had been told to offer Isaac, and the command had not been modified by an allusion to a lamb God would provide. Abraham does not crumble under the oppression of emotion. Faith, superior to emotion, rose to the occasion. "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son" (Gen 22:8).

The truth of the matter is that most of us must carry difficult burdens--burdens we had rather not experience. But this is no handicap to faith, and thus is no real impairment to

you! You are always better for believing.

Faith is superior to emotion! Think of the three Hebrew children, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, whose Hebrew names were Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. They were commanded to serve the gods of Nebuchadnezzar, and bow before a golden image he had made (Dan 3:14). When they refused, the earthly sovereign spoke clearly to them. *“If ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?”* (Dan 3:15). Here was a test emotion could not pass! Fear stood like a ravaging lion to devour these young men. But faith rose like a mighty champion, superior to emotion. Hear these young men as faith constrained them to respond. *“O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up”* (Dan 3:16b-18, NIV).

Faith is superior to emotion! It can motivate in a way not possible to emotion. It is important to underscore the danger of a religion that is anchored in emotion. That is the type of religion that thrusts people into spiritual jeopardy. Beware of any religious emphasis that leaves you feeling good, but unable to trust the Lord!

#### **FAITH TRANSCENDS EXPERIENCE**

Experience is wonderful when it comes from faith in God. It is good when David slays Goliath, Elijah slays the prophets of Baal, and Elisha raises a boy from the dead. By faith remarkable things were experienced by believers of old, who *“conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection”* (Heb 11:33-35, NASB).

Faith, however, is not confined to the arena of experience. It can function triumphantly when there are no favorable experiences. Do you doubt the truth of this? Hear the Word of the Lord. *“Others were tortured, not accepting their release, in order that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in*

**Faith is superior to emotion! It can motivate in a way not possible to emotion. It is important to underscore the danger of a religion that is anchored in emotion. That is the type of religion that thrusts people into spiritual jeopardy. Beware of any religious emphasis that leaves you feeling good, but unable to trust the Lord!**

*goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground. And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they should not be made perfect”* (Heb 11:36-40, NASB).

And what of these noble souls who did not participate in the miraculous--who left this world as though they were defeated? They gained God's approval through their faith! Today, they stand amidst the great cloud of witnesses that surround us, attesting to the superiority of faith (Heb 12:1). “Run,” they cry! “Run!” Do not give up the race because you are not experiencing deliverance! You can refuse deliverance, and still go to be with the Lord. You can be an outcast, with nothing apparently working in your favor, and still receive the crown of life!

We do not desire a life of hardship for anyone. We fervently desire that the faithful may *“prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers”* (3 John 2). But, if this does not happen, it does not mean you are not *“more than a conqueror!”* (Rom 8:37). By faith, you can *“boast about”* your *“weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in”* you (2 Cor 12:9, NASB). Faith cries out to languishing experience, *“Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong”* (2 Cor 12:10).

If, dear child of God, you have been cast down because of your experience, come up higher! Faith is superior, and it will make you superior, to experience. Suffice it to say, a religion that unduly elevates experience is a most dangerous one. Such an approach obscures faith, so sorely needed to overcome the world.

#### **FAITH IS EFFECTIVE**

The *“law of faith”* leads to Kingdom effectiveness! It is not a law that fails us, but one that sustains and strengthens us. It is a law honored in heaven, and effective upon earth. We cannot leave this subject without drawing attention to the remarkable effectiveness of faith. If you are in Christ, you possess comforting evidence of that effectiveness. Ponder these realities, and be refreshed.

#### **Hearts Cleansed by Faith**

Knowledge of the acceptance of the Gentiles was an epoch in the history of the church. Once convinced of this display of Divine grace, Peter announced, *“and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith”* (Acts 15:9, NASB). And what is a cleansed heart? It is one that in which guilt has been removed. It occurs when the *“conscience”* is *“purged from dead works”* (Heb 9:14). A cleansed heart is one that realizes Divine acceptance, having been made pure.

Can this be accomplished by the law of works? Can the conscience be favorably effected by a faithless deed? Indeed not.

Judas could find no solace, even though he returned the bloody money he had received for betraying Jesus (Matt 27:4-5)! Esau could not placate his conscience by seeking the inheritance he had forfeited, with bitter tears (Heb 12:17). The Lord is not satisfied with “*thousands of rams, in ten thousand rivers of oil,*” or the presentation of “*my first-born for my rebellious acts,*” or “*the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul*” (Micah 6:7). Such works, as noble as they may appear, will not please God--and they can bring no cleansing to you! Only faith can cleanse the heart, making it pure before God, and confidently clean to you! The “*law of faith*” is the superior law!

#### **Faith Sanctifies the Individual**

There is not much said about sanctification in the churches today. Often, those who do speak of it corrupt its meaning in the minds of their hearers. Sanctification is one of the principle aspects of God’s great salvation. God has made Jesus to become our “*sanctification*” (1 Cor 1:30). Without “*sanctification,*” an absolute essentiality, “*no one will see the Lord*” (Heb 12:14).

The word “*sanctification*” speaks of holiness, acceptance, and purity. It is a word denoting consecration to God through Christ and by the Spirit. This is what gives Divine utility to the believer--what enables him to be used by God, and to work together with Him (1 Cor 3:9).

How is the individual sanctified? How do we become holy and pure, and thus usable to God. It is not by the law of works! It is not possible to work your way into a position where God can use you! As remarkable as human discipline may appear, it is not adequate for this assignment!

The Word of the Lord is clear on this subject. Christ’s commission to Saul of Tarsus revealed the truth on this matter. Jesus appointed him “*to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive*

*forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me*” (Acts 26:18). See, your faith is what qualifies you for service in the vineyard of the Lord! That is the dominating credential God requires!

#### **The Righteous Live By Faith**

How is spiritual life sustained? Many believe it is by routine, discipline, and solid habits. Whole religious systems have been placed into effect that teach this. They are all wrong! Life with God is not

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sustained by habit! It is not maintained by a disciplined routine. This does not mean we disdain routine. It does mean routine is not equal to the requirements of spiritual life.

And, what does it mean to “*live*”--for the righteous to “*live*.” It means more than to merely exist. This is being “*alive to God*” (Rom 6:11). It is being joyfully sensitive to Him, and desirous to be in His presence. It means we are hearing Him who is “*speaking from heaven*” (Heb 12:25). Such “*life*” enables us to be “*led by the Spirit*” (Rom 8:14). Those who are spiritually alive are more conscious of heaven than earth, and of God than men. They live “*by every Word of God*” (Matt 4:4), and are noted for drawing near to God (Heb 10:22).

How is this life sustained. Do we live by what we do? By the routines we follow? God has spoken on this matter, so there is no need for conjecture. “*For in it [the Gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH”* (Rom 1:17, NASB). How frequently this truth is

affirmed! “*. . . the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me*” (Gal 2:20). “*Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, “THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH”*” (Gal 3:11). “*BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH; AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM*” (Heb 10:38).

Faith is what keeps the child of God alive and sensitive to God! This is what puts heaven in our eye, and confidence in our heart! Faith substantizes the truth of the Gospel to our hearts. It convinces us that God is for us, and not against us. It persuades us that Christ died for us and lives for us. Faith assures us we are accepted by God through Christ Jesus, even though we have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

In spite of this obvious truth, faith is rarely the emphasis of the contemporary church. Much of what is done in the name of Christ does not require faith. You can do such things without trusting in the Lord with all of your heart. You really do not have to depend upon the Lord to fulfill sectarian requirements. But if you want to live toward God--to be nourished and strengthened by His Presence--faith, and faith alone, is required!

#### **Faith Justifies the Individual**

The legalist does not talk much about justification. Words like that are not found in his corrupted vocabulary. But this word is in the Divine nomenclature, and is central in patterns of heavenly thought. Because we have already touched upon this subject, a few observations will suffice.

In the matter of justification, Scripture sets faith in juxtaposition to law. You are either justified because of what you do, or because of your faith. This is foundational to our understanding of salvation. Your faith enables you to join in the affirmation of the Spirit. “*For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law*” (Rom 3:28).



This is not a mere creedal statement, to be embraced without discerning the case. Here is something you can know, and of which you can be fully persuaded. *“Nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified”* (Gal 2:16). We offer no apologies for the strength of this confession. If it does not mesh with preconceived notions of salvation, then throw away the preconceived notions. Truth never opposes itself. It is, however, set in firm opposition to what is NOT true!

### **This is Something Evident**

We are dealing with something that is *“evident,”* or obvious to the pure in heart. *“Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH”* (Gal 3:11). Once you have *“tasted of the Lord,”* it is clear that Law--any law--cannot clear your record before God. It is not possible for a sinner to remove his own sin, or for works to undo what we have done! Faith makes that evident to us! It is true that many professed teachers do not see this. It is not *“evident”* to them. Their failure to perceive this central matter disqualifies them from being a teacher of God’s people. Until this truth is seen, they occupy the *“room of the unlearned”* (1 Cor 14:16, KJV).

### **A Remarkable Commentary**

Paul provides a remarkable commentary on the effectiveness of faith in justification. He shows us the Gentiles, who had no Law, and thus no works of the law. Gentiles who have been received by God experienced righteousness independently of the Law. Here is Paul’s reasoning. *“What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith; but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by*

*faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone”* (Rom 9:30-32).

Israel, in covenant with God, zealously sought to appropriate righteousness, or a state of justification, by means of Law. They did NOT receive righteousness! They did NOT arrive at a righteousness that resulted from law-keeping, or measuring up! Their efforts caused them to *“stumble”* over Jesus, Who brought salvation. Attempts to appropriate justification by means of Law inevitably leads to a rejection of Christ!

Notice the power of Paul’s argument. The Gentiles found righteousness even though they were

appropriates justification. *“Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Rom 5:1).

### **AVOIDING ERRONEOUS CONCLUSIONS**

Let none conclude that the Law is evil or sinful. It serves an appointed purpose, but that purpose is NOT justification! By convincing us of the unacceptability of our works, the Law brings us to Christ. That is simply another way of saying it convinces us we need a Savior. We are not wise enough nor strong enough to save ourselves! Even when we are told what to do, our incapacity to please God clings to us like a giant weight. Let the Scripture state the case for us. It does it so very well.

*“But the Scripture has shut up all men under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith”* (Gal 3:2-24, NASB).

### **Imprisoned in Sin**

Do not miss it! Apart from Christ, we were *“shut up,”* or imprisoned in, sin! We cannot work our way out, with Law or without it! Before faith *“came”* to us, we were under the Law. Dominated by it, we actually could not believe! We were *“locked up until faith should be revealed”* (NIV). Through the Gospel of Christ--not the Law--God *“opened the door of faith”* to us (Acts 14:27). We were thus justified by believing news rather than fulfilling requirements! The Law, with all of its demands, offered us no help. There is not a particle of grace in Law.

There are no remedies in Law, or means to recovery. Once broken, the seal of *“condemnation”* is placed upon us. Only faith can remove that seal! And, when *“there is therefore now no condemnation,”* all fleshly boasting is excluded by *“the law of faith.”* It is

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NOT pursuing it! The Jews did not find righteousness, even though they WERE pursuing it! The Gentiles were constrained by the message of a conferred righteousness--the Gospel (Rom 1:16-17). The Jews were constrained by a Law that demanded righteousness! You see, the Gospel has saving power, the Law does not! The Gospel offers something you can obtain, the Law does not! The Gospel offers salvation to those who will believe, the Law does not! It never did, nor was it ever intended to do so.

Our peace with God has come because we have believed the *“record God gave of His Son”* (1 John 5:10-11). The Law of faith, having excluded all boasting,

impossible to boast in the flesh and believe at the same time. Such boasting and faith are mutually exclusive. Where fleshly boasting is found, faith is not present, and where faith is present, boasting in the flesh is excluded.

## THE CONCLUSION OF FAITH

<sup>28</sup> **Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.** The words “we conclude” not only introduce a deductive statement, they put forth an official tenet of apostolic doctrine. Other

presented with the facts in the case. The Gentiles have sinned without the Law, and the Jews have sinned with it. No one has managed to live flawlessly, and no one has met the Divinely appointed objective of seeking and finding God. All have

*which believeth in Jesus*” (3:24-26).

Faith can and must take hold of those realities. The grace comes from God. The redemption price was paid by Christ Jesus. God Himself presented the covering for sin. Christ’s blood is what satisfied God and enabled Him to be both the Just and the Justifier of the one believing in Jesus. God’s righteousness is the driving force behind the remission of sins. All of those are independent of man. His works have nothing whatsoever to do with their accomplishment. Not a single mote of weight or a gram of power can be added to them by any mortal. They stand independently of men, yet must be appropriated by them.

**Settle it in your heart, if salvation is dependent upon the works of men, this is what they must do. They must get a Savior from heaven and bring Him down to die. Then, after he has died, they must raise Him from the dead. This reasoning assumes they realize their need of a Savior in the first place, which no man has ever concluded on his own.**

versions accentuate this perspective: i.e., “We maintain that,”<sup>NASB</sup> “we hold that.”<sup>RSV</sup> This is a conclusion driven by faith and energized by the Holy Spirit. It is not an opinion, and is not subject to change or update. A spiritual conclusion is to reasoning what the pillars Jachin and Boaz were to Solomon’s temple (2 Chron 3:15-17). This “conclusion” is the result of comprehending what has been said before. It is an explanation of why a righteousness from God is announced in the Gospel, rather than demanded by the Law. This “conclusion” also affirms there is no other way to be justified.

sinned, and all come short of the glory of God.

The point being driven home by the Holy Spirit is this: Human guilt and powerlessness cannot be resolved by any form of discipline or law keeping. Men cannot be trained to be righteous. There is no routine that can rid them of their sin or bring God’s righteousness to them. Once sin is committed, no remedy can be found within the natural realm.

### FAITH REQUIRES A COMPLETED WORK

While faith does “come by hearing,” it also requires a completed work. It must rest upon something that has already been accomplished. It cannot repose upon something that is yet to be developed: i.e., *I have faith I can do it.*

### The Proclamation

The accomplished work has already been declared. It is the substance that faith must grasp. “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: 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; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him

### Only Faith is Capable

If men could not keep the Law of God, who is the fool that will imagine man is capable of attaining these things by his own power and ingenuity? If ten commandments were beyond the reach of man’s natural powers, does any one imagine redemption, propitiation, and justification are within their reach?

Let us imagine for a moment that the redemption that is in Christ Jesus could be appropriated independently of faith. Man would be required to bring a Savior down from heaven, and bring Him back from the dead once He died. This is precisely the reasoning found in the tenth chapter of Romans. It is a manner of thought that is forbidden. “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’ (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)” (Rom 10:6-7). Settle it in your heart, if salvation is dependent upon the works of men, this is what they must do. They must get a Savior from heaven and bring Him down to die. Then, after he has died, they must raise Him from the dead. This reasoning assumes they realize their need of a Savior in the first place, which no man has ever concluded on his own.

*The imputation of the righteousness of God by faith excludes all boasting in the flesh, by Given O. Blakely*

The conclusion, therefore, is incontestable. *“A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”* **God will not be pleased with anything short of faith in Christ!** The Prophet said it in these words, *“Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”* (Micah 6:7). Micah continued to show what God desired from men. *“He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”* (v 8). Those three things, as confirmed by both Moses and the Prophets, required a change of nature.

Even though animal sacrifices were commanded by God and offered according to the Law, yet they brought Him no pleasure. As it is written, *“In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure”* (Heb 10:6; Psa 40:6). They did not effect a change in men, but let them with a defiled and condemning conscience. Thus it is written, *“For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never by the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins? But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins”*<sup>NASB</sup> (Heb 10:1-4).

**Why Bring This Up?**

It might appear all of this has little to do with our text. Permit me to elaborate on the necessity of this reasoning.

Under the Law, the greatest work took place on the day of atonement. In that prescribed routine was the loftiest involvement of the high priest. Precision and order marked every facet of that sacrifice. It was offered at a particular time and in a particular place. Appointed

priestly vestments were put on. Specific animals were used, and step-by-step procedures fulfilled (Lev 16). Yet, in that extensive procedure, sin was not removed and the conscience was not purged, *“For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.”*

How, then, could any person hope to remove his sin and realize a cleansed conscience by doing his best not to murder, steal, or lie? If the loftiest work of the Law did not one whit to justify men, what would lead anyone to believe any work of Law—any obedience rendered in the energy of the flesh—could accomplish justification? The basis for justification

**If the loftiest work of the Law did not one whit to justify men, what would lead anyone to believe any work of Law—any obedience rendered in the energy of the flesh—could accomplish justification? The basis for justification cannot reside in the one being justified.**

cannot reside in the one being justified.

**JUSTIFIED BY FAITH**

*“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”* Other versions read as follows. *“We reckon therefore that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.”*<sup>ASV</sup> *“For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.”*<sup>NIV</sup> *“For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law.”*<sup>NRSV</sup>

Our text is speaking of the **GROUND** of our justification: the foundation upon which it rests. It is faith *“apart from the works of the Law.”* The professed church has divided over this issue. One segment of the church argues that faith is combined with works as the basis for justification. The other contends that faith itself is the ground for

justification, without works.

First, the Spirit has no regard for the contentions of men. He is placing before us the reason for our justification, and it is apart from the *“works of the Law.”* Further, *“works of the Law”* and *“obedience”* are, to my knowledge, nowhere said to be synonymous. Later, the Spirit will make this affirmation, *“But to one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness”*<sup>NRSV</sup> (Rom 4:5).

**A Type of Justification**

A type, or picture, of justification is seen in the Lord’s directions for rearing up an altar of stone on which to make sacrifices. *“And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it”* (Ex 20:25). The fact that a person may have been a skilled craftsman had nothing whatsoever to do with the case. If man’s *“tool”* was put to the altar, it would become polluted, or defiled.

Man’s works, however disciplined and precise they may be, cannot become the basis for justification. Neither, indeed, can our faith be placed in them. God will not save us because of *“works of righteousness which we have done”* (Tit 3:5). Emphatically we are told salvation is *“Not of works, lest any man should boast”* (Eph 2:9). God has saved us and called us *“not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began”* (2 Tim 1:9).

When affirming the existence of a *“remnant according to the election of grace,”* the Spirit makes a poignant statement that is of relevance to this discussion. *“And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work”* (Rom 11:6).

When it comes to the **BASIS** of justification, faith and works cannot mix. We cannot trust in Christ and in our own

accomplishments. The **foundation** has already been laid, and it will not mingle with any other. *“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ”* (1 Cor 3:11). Faith takes hold of the foundation!

### James and Works

It is unfortunate that men have chosen to argue about Scripture rather than believe it. One of the chief sources of contention in Christendom surrounds James’ teaching on works and that of Paul. The teachers are different, but only because they are dealing with different matters. It will be to our advantage to briefly consider some of James’ remarks. They were given by the inspiration of God, and are not to be ignored.

While Paul declared the BASIS of salvation, James dealt with the EVIDENCE of it. Both affirmed that FAITH was the means of appropriating it. In providing an example of justification, Paul affirmed, *“Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness”* (Rom 4:3). James makes precisely the same point. *“Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness”* (James 2:23).

James was dealing with those having an empty profession. He referred to them as *“adulterers and adulteresses,”* who, because of their friendship with the world, had become the enemies of God (James 4:4). The question with James was not HOW men become righteous before God, but how they PROVE to others that such has occurred. *“Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works”* (2:18).

James, the brother of our Lord (Gal 1:19), sternly rebukes those who affirm faith, yet lack the evidence of it. He will not allow men to imagine they have faith

if they are lacking works. *“Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone”* (James 2:17). *“But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?”* (2:20).

When James says, *“Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only”* (2:24), he is not declaring the doctrine of justification. Rather, he is uprooting the notion that justification can occur without a fundamental change taking place in the one who is justified. His view is one which reasons from effect back to cause. In that view, he makes no allowance for an unproductive faith.

When Paul dealt with the same subject as James, he also made no allowance for the absence of works. *“Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God”* (1 Cor 7:19). *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them”* (Eph 2:10). *“Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works”* (Tit 2:14). But this is never set forth as the basis, or foundation, of our justification, or the ground of Divine acceptance.

### Righteousness Imputed Without Works

The imputation of righteousness is expressly said to be *“without works.”* Because I will be dealing with this passage in a later lesson, I will only quote it here. *“Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin”* (Rom 4:6-8). **Works**

**grow from the tree of justification, but are never its root.**

Those who seek righteousness through the *“works of the Law”* will stumble over the Stumblingstone, rather than be founded upon it (Rom 9:32).

If a person chooses to seek justification through works, all the works of the Law must be fulfilled. *“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith”* (Gal 3:10-11). In this case, *“life”* equates to being justified, or living in the favor of God. If justification depends upon your work, you must do it all!

### WHY FAITH JUSTIFIES

Faith justifies because it receives *“the record that God gave of his Son”* (1 John 5:10-11). Sin had to be taken away before you could be freed from its dominion (Heb 9:26). The devil had to be destroyed before you could be released from his hold (Heb 2:14). God had to be satisfied before you could be received (Isa 53:11). Principalities and powers had to be plundered before you could be free from their oppression (Col 2:15). The handwriting of ordinances that was against us had to be fully satisfied before you could be loosed from the Law’s condemnation (Col 2:14).

No amount of work on your part could accomplish these things. Jesus, and Jesus alone, fulfilled them all. Faith receives what Jesus has done, and is ready to act upon it. That is why it justifies. Faith never balks at a word from God. It always depends on God being faithful, and it is always honored by God. Without it, it is impossible to please God.

## THE GOD OF ALL WHO BELIEVE

*“<sup>29</sup> Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also.”* If men could be justified by *“the works of*

*the Law,”* then only the Jews would be justified. As a covenant, the Law pertained only to them, and to them alone (Rom 9:4). As a moral code, or Law, it was

given *“that every mouth might be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God”* (Rom 3:19). The Law, therefore, was never intended to be a

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means of justification, or becoming right before God. Yet, if justification is by works, this could not be the case.

### A Legalistic View

While this may appear relatively apparent to us, it was revolutionary for the Jews—even those who believed. A strict legalist could support the notion that the Jews alone could expect salvation. Jesus Himself said, *“Salvation is of the Jews”* (John 4:22). When Jesus first sent out the twelve, He said to them, *“Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel”* (Matt 10:5-6). To a Syrophenician woman He said, *“I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel”* (Matt 15:24).

### The Household of Cornelius

Nearly ten years after the day of Pentecost, the Gentiles remained largely neglected by the church—even by the Apostles and elders. The acceptance of Cornelius upon the basis of his faith proved to be an epoch to Peter, chief spokesman for the Twelve. It was at that time that he said before the Gentile Cornelius, *“Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him”* (Acts 10:34-35). This was a hallmark event.

### The Ministry of Paul and Barnabas

Later, when the conversion of Cornelius’ household was reported to the brethren in Jerusalem, they *“glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life”* (Acts 11:18). About seven years later, when Paul and Barnabas related how the Gentiles had been converted through their ministry, they *“rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles”* (Acts 14:27). This represented a major breakthrough in understanding as well as Divine accomplishment.

To this day, there remains considerable confusion among professed believers concerning the Jews and the

Gentiles. Some are convinced the Jews have been written off, with no Divine committal to their recovery. Others believe the Gentiles have a separate Gospel, preached by Paul, and that it has nothing whatsoever to do with the Jews. Still others look forward to a period of time after a rapture, when the Jews will be brought to the Lord by means of another Gospel.

All of these notions are dashed to the ground by the affirmation set before us. *“Is He the God of the Jews only? is He not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also.”* “Ah,” says the sophist, “but God is not the God of the Jews at all. That is something that occurred in the past.” However, that is not true. If He is *“not the God of the Jews only,”* then it remains that He is still the *“God of the Jews.”* Once again, in justification, Gentiles are perceived as partaking of something belonging first to the Jews. The Gospel is to *“the Jew first, and ALSO to the Greek,”* or Gentiles (Rom 1:16). Tribulation and anguish is promised to every soul that *“does evil, of the Jew first, and ALSO of the Gentile”* (Rom 2:9). Glory, honor, and peace are also promised

### Righteousness, the Common Need of All

Throughout a considerable percentage of history, there was a Divinely imposed distinction among men—Jew and Gentile. This difference dominated God’s dealings with men for over 1,500 years. Because of this, those without faith tended to regard God as a *“respector of persons,”* thinking that the Jews as superior to others.

However, our text has shown us that when it came to NEED, all men were considered the same. They ALL need a righteousness from God. When it comes to the matter of guilt, they are also all the same: *“ALL have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”*

There will not be a separate Gospel for the Jews or the Gentiles, because their need is no different. A single Savior died for them all. One Lord conquered their foe. One Propitiation is offered for a means to Divine mercy. One Man reconciled them to God. God will NOT accept the Jews on one basis, and the Gentiles on another. That would dishonor Jesus, and bring reproach to God.

The righteousness that is declared, therefore, belongs no more to the Jew than to the Gentiles. And, arrogant Gentiles must know they have no more right to it than the Jews.

### SAME GOD?

When the Spirit uses the expressions *“God of the Jews”* and *“God of the Gentiles,”* He is referring to the Lord in His **redemptive capacity**, not the creative one. While it is true that both owe their origin to God, that is not the point of the text. It is their acceptance by God that is the point, not their origin.

The phraseology speaks of a mutual and intimate relationship between God and the people. Thus the prophet Jeremiah said, *“And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God”* (Jer 30:22). The Prophet further said this relationship would be the result of a new heart. *“And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they*

**Throughout a considerable percentage of history, there was a Divinely imposed distinction among men—Jew and Gentile. This difference dominated God’s dealings with men for over 1,500 years.**

to *“to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and ALSO to the Gentile”* (Rom 2:10). There are *“vessels of mercy”* whom God has prepared for His glory, *“not of the Jews only, but ALSO of the Gentiles?”* (Rom 9:24).

The glory of the acceptance of the Gentiles has been largely obscured by the institutional church. It is one of the great occurrences in history, and is not to be treated lightly. It is consistently viewed as an unusual token of Divine favor.

shall be my people, and I will be their God" (Jer 24:7).

One of the marks of the New Covenant is that God "will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jer 31:33; Heb 8:10). Ezekiel spoke of the same association (Ezek 11:20; 36:28). This is the most profound of all relationships.

In the ninth chapter, the Spirit will again make a point of this. "Even us, whom he hath called, **not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?** As he saith also in Osee (Hosea), I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not

my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God" (9:24-26).

That speaks of a redemptive relationship in which sin has been expiated, and the individual made acceptable in Christ Jesus. Such receive a righteousness from God upon the basis of their faith.

## ONE BASIS FOR JUSTIFICATION

<sup>30</sup> . . . since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith." Here again the means through which we are justified is declared. It should be apparent that this can easily escape us. Indeed, there is a great neglect found among preachers and teachers in affirming justification by faith. I know of people who have spent their life in "church," and have never heard a solid proclamation of this truth. "Works," in some form, are almost the universal emphasis of the professed church. Most religious specialists are professed experts of some kind of human "work." God's messengers, on the other hand are experts in the Gospel—in the announcement of a righteousness from God.

### RELIGIOUS SPECIALISTS

Among men, there is really only one problem—sinning and coming short of the glory of God. There is also only one remedy—a righteousness from God. The perception of these circumstances is essential to a truly effective ministry for Christ Jesus.

The outbreak of religious specialists during the past two decades has cast a cloud of dust in the eyes of the people. Multitudes are being led to believe their primary difficulties and advantages are found in their age category. Thus we have specialists in children, youth, young adult, middle aged, old aged, etc. Men speak of the X-generation and the Boomer-generation just as though they were Divinely revealed categories. But they are not. To classify people according to

WHEN they were born is more related to heathenism than to Christ Jesus. To teach people that primary distinctions are traced to thinking with the left side of the brain or the right side of it, smacks of a godless analyst, not a godly one.

When it comes to groups of people in the flesh, God has only two classifications: "circumcised" and "uncircumcised," or "Jew" and "Gentile." By using these

**The whole of our salvation postulates three personalities in the Godhead. Each one is Divine, and each has a special work to do. The Father purposes, the Son executes, and the Spirit applies. The Son fulfilled the will of the Father, and the Spirit fulfills the will of the Son.**

terms, the Spirit emphasizes that one was a covenanted people ("circumcised"), and the other an uncovenanted people ("uncircumcised").

He declares there "is no difference" in the matter of their need—they "come short of the glory of God." He also affirms there is "no difference" in the matter of their past—"all have sinned." Neither group has yielded a righteous man, one that sought God, or one that was good. Those are just the facts in the case. At

some point, those who speak for the Lord have to get down to that situation, else the Gospel will really have no relevance.

### NOT A NATIONAL GOD

God is not a national God, whereas idols often are. No group of fleshly people owns God, or can claim exclusive identity with Him. He is truly "the God of all flesh" (Jer 32:27). He is He who "from one man he made every nation of men" (Acts 17:26). The entire race can repeat in unison, "Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us?" (Mal 2:10). The ONLY unique identity God holds among men is toward those who are in Christ Jesus. Only they have a unparalleled relationship with Him.

Notice this is traced to God's oneness: "Seeing it is ONE God." Some, stumbling over this language, assume there is only one Person involved. Thus, the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit are viewed as one Person doing three different things. However, this is a purely humanistic view of God, and is to be rejected as a total misrepresentation of the case. The whole of our salvation postulates three personalities in the Godhead. Each one is Divine, and each has a special work to do. The Father purposes, the Son executes, and the Spirit applies. The Son fulfilled the will of the Father, and the Spirit fulfills the will of the Son. There is no need to go further into this matter, as the whole of Apostolic doctrine is an elaboration of these things.

### BY FAITH AND THROUGH FAITH

"Seeing it is one God, which shall

justify the circumcision **by** faith, and uncircumcision **through** faith." All major translations use the words "by" and "through." The two words have slightly different meanings. "By," means "out of faith." "Through" means "by means of the faith." I understand there to be no essential difference in the words. The idea is that righteousness is **given** to us through the vehicle of faith—that is, God gives it to the believer. From the pragmatic viewpoint, righteousness is experienced through faith—that is, it is **received** because of faith.

The reasoning of the verse appears to be as follows. One God will justify the covenanted Jews by faith, and the uncovenanted Gentiles through the same faith. Peter would call it "like precious faith," or "a faith of the same kind as ours" NASB (2 Pet 1:1).

There is a common dilemma among men, and a common answer. It comes from a single God, and through a single means—faith.

Observing the unusual emphasis the Spirit is placing on the matter of being justified by faith, or receiving a

righteousness from God through faith, I am compelled to ask why this is not preached with greater frequency and urgency. In many circles with which I am familiar, the subject of righteousness by faith is rarely, if ever, mentioned.

This line of reasoning will continue through the first verse of the fifth chapter. It should be obvious to you that this is a pivotal teaching. It should be equally apparent that it can easily escape us—thus the extended teaching.

#### A BRIEF REVIEW

The words justify, justified, justifieth, justification, and righteousness are key words in Romans.

1. "Justify" (3:30). Mentioned with faith.
2. "Justified" (2:13; 3:4,20,24,28; 4:2; 5:1; 8:30). Mentioned twice with "faith," once with "grace," once with Christ's blood.
3. "Justification" (4:25; 5:16,18). Mentioned once with Christ's resurrection, and twice with God's "free gift."
4. "Justifier" (3:25). Mentioned with believing.
5. "Justifieth" (4:5; 8:33). Mentioned once with faith, and once with God's doing.

6. "Righteous" (2:5; 3:10; 5:7,19). Mentioned once with the obedience of Christ.

6. "Righteousness" (1:17; 2:26; 3:5,21,22, 25,26; 4:3,5,6,9,11,13,22; 5:1,17,18,21; 6:13,16,18,19,20; 8:4,10; 9:28,30,31; 10:3, 4,5,6,10; 14:17). Mentioned three times with God's revelation, seven times with faith, six times with believing, four times with imputation, twice with God's gift, once with grace, twice with the Holy Spirit.

Those holy associations should provoke us to a deeper inquiry into the matter of righteousness. This is particularly true when you consider the words of the Lord Jesus. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and **His righteousness** . . ." (Matt 6:33).

Our hearts should also be persuaded this righteousness comes to us by faith. When it comes to "works," it is Christ's achievement that is the foundation of our acceptance. God honors what Jesus has done, and has exalted Him to His right hand because of His work, giving Him all power in heaven and in earth. No discerning soul will deny this is the case, but find great pleasure in its truth.

## DO WE MAKE VOID THE LAW?

<sup>31a</sup> **Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not!**

The strength of this line of reasoning is confirmed in nearly every major translation. "Do we then make the law of **none effect** through faith" <sup>ASV</sup> "Do we then **nullify** the Law through faith?" <sup>NASB</sup> "Do we then **overthrow** the law by this faith?" <sup>NRSV</sup> "Law then do we **make useless** through the faith?" <sup>Young's Literal</sup> "Well then, if we emphasize faith, does this mean that we can **forget about** the law?" <sup>NLT</sup> "Are we saying that the Law has been **made pointless** by faith?" <sup>NJB</sup>

When justification by faith is taught, do interfere with obedience to God's moral requirements? Do the commandments of God suddenly become useless and pointless? Is it true, as some affirm, that insisting we are justified by faith cause people to become antinomian, or without

law? Does it encourage loose living and the neglect of ones soul?

Flesh is anxious to get rid of the Law, because it detests the commands of God. Therefore, it seeks to treat grace as though it offered a license to sin, and removed any danger of falling from grace. Legion is the name of those who espouse such heresy. Further, countless numbers of people practice this heresy, even though they formally deny it. Who is able to number the people who willingly and constantly live in contradiction of the Law of God, claiming their preliminary obedience to the Gospel, or their identity with a religious institution as enough reason for God to receive them.

This was a constant charge brought against both Jesus and Paul—namely, that they had no regard for the Law. The

scribes and Pharisees and many of the people tried to pit the Law against Jesus (John 8:5; 12:34). As for Paul, he was slanderously reported to have taught, "Let us do good that evil may come" (Rom 3:8). Others charged him with persuading men to "worship God contrary to the law" (Acts 18:13).

The tendency to view grace and faith as a license to sin continues to this day. Those who emphasize being justified by faith (what few there appear to be) are viewed as preaching a deficient Gospel, and not taking due regard of the book of James. But these are false charges, and are the result of spiritual blindness.

If the Gospel of Christ reveals a righteousness from God (1:17), what manner of reasoning would conclude that the declaration of that Gospel fomented

sin? That is an utter absurdity!

Has God erased the Law, as some affirm, only to repromulgate some of the commandments that are perceived as compulsory under the New Covenant? Is that what Jesus came to do?

**CAME NOT TO DESTROY**

Jesus forbade us to think of Him as nullifying or destroying the Law or the Prophets. **“Do not think that I came to abolish [destroy<sup>KJV</sup>] the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill”**<sup>NASB</sup> (Matt 5:17). If *“the knowledge of sin”* comes through the Law (Rom 3:20), it is absurd to think Jesus came to destroy it.

**ENDED AS A MEANS TO RIGHTEOUSNESS**

The weakness of the Law was not

all law--for any approach to righteousness that depends upon man. This is precisely the point made in Galatians 3:21. *“Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law.”*<sup>NASB</sup>

But life cannot be imparted by means of law—even if the law is from God, and is *“holy, and just, and good”* (Rom 7:12). Apart from faith, all doing is nothing more than *“dead works,”* to be discarded in favor of faith, which alone can appropriate the righteousness of God.

With remarkable precision, the Spirit reminds us, *“And all our righteousnesses (not unrighteousnesses) are like filthy rags”* (Isa 64:6). No amount of doing can get rid of that condition.

avoiding such a conclusion. The NASB states the situation more clearly. *“Having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us.”* The Law was removed in its condemning capacity; that is, it can no longer condemn those who are in Christ Jesus.

The *“ordinances,”* in this case, were not the commandments of God, but the ceremonies contained in the Law. These ceremonies were an acknowledgment of guilt, and were given to the ancient people because of guilt. But now, Christ Jesus has cancelled the debt, having removed our sins from us as far as the East is from the West (Psa 103:12).

**THE LAW OF COMMANDMENTS CONTAINED IN ORDINANCES**

The same truth—namely the cancellation of the debt sin incurred—is taught in the book of Ephesians. *“Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances”* (Eph 2:15). Again, the Spirit carefully states the case., He does not say the commandments themselves were abolished, but *“the commandments contained in ordinances.”*

**But life cannot be imparted by means of law—even if the law is from God, and is “holy, and just, and good” (Rom 7:12). Apart from faith, all doing is nothing more than “dead works,” to be discarded in favor of faith, which alone can appropriate the righteousness of God.**

due to any deficiency in it. Rather, it was weak *“through the flesh”* of men (Rom 8:3). It offered life to men, but its demands exceeding their ability: *“Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them”* (Gal 3:10). The Law was not an appropriate means to obtain righteousness, and thus it was ended in that capacity—or in a covenantal capacity. Thus it is written, *“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes”*<sup>NKJV</sup> (Rom 10:4).

In this capacity, the Law stands for

**BLOTTING OUT THE HANDWRITING OF ORDINANCES**

The death of Christ is related to the cancellation of the indebtedness created by our infractions of the Law. Scripture states it this way. *“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross”* (Col 2:14).

Some have supposed this was a destruction of the Law itself. However, the Spirit carefully states the case,

This phrase refers to the same thing mentioned in the ninth chapter of Hebrews. There the Spirit refers to the Old Covenant as one *“Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation”* (9:10). These were the *“commandments contained in ordinances,”* imposed upon the people as an acknowledgment of guilt. This is not a reference to the abolishment of the Ten Commandments. Both the Ephesian and Colossian texts refer to the Law in its covenantal aspects, not its moral requirements.

**WE ESTABLISH THE LAW**

<sup>31b</sup> **“On the contrary, we establish the law.”** Such a statement could not be made if Christ’s death had abrogated, or nullified, the Law of God. By establishing the Law, we acknowledge that its assessment of us was correct. We

had broken the Law, and thus stood guilty before the Lord. Our mouths were stopped by the Law, and we had to acknowledge our personal guilt.

If this were not the case, there would

be no need for Christ at all. Christ coming into the world and laying down His life confirms the truth of the Law. When we embrace His death by faith, we also acknowledge the truth of the Law’s condemnation. Because of the Law, we



fled to Christ for refuge, to hold on the hope set before us (Heb 6:18).

**THE MORAL LAW**

By moral law, I mean the commandments by which sin was defined, and through which the knowledge of sin was cultured. Faith establishes the Law by enabling us to fulfill its demands.

This is done in a twofold sense. First, our hearts are brought into accord with the Law. This is the result of God writing His Laws upon our hearts and putting them into our minds (Heb 8:10; 10:16). With our minds, we ourselves “serve the Law of God” (Rom 7:25).

There is another sense in which we “establish the Law.” With sin being removed, the Law written on our hearts, and a new nature given to us, we actually do from the heart what the Law demands—and we do it out of preference. Here is how the Scripture states this marvelous reality. *“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit”* (Rom 8:3-4).

**THE CEREMONIAL LAW**

By “ceremonial law,” I mean the routines established under the First Covenant, to address the matter of sin and uncleanness. By faith, we also establish the truth of those routines by embracing their antitype, Christ Jesus. By taking hold of the “Lamb of God,” we realize the fulfillment of all those types, establishing their truth and relevance.

What is more, by embracing the One they prefigured, we acknowledge they are no longer binding upon men. Just as John the Baptist concluded his introductory work when Jesus came, so the ceremonial ordinances under the Law concluded their work when the real Sacrifice, determined before the foundation of the world, was offered. There was no further need for them, yet they continue to speak to us.

**THE SABBATH DAY COMMANDMENT**

A word should be said about the Sabbath commandment. The presence of the fourth commandment is what gave rise to the development of a theology that affirmed the complete abrogation of the Law. This, men supposed, would refute those who affirm the Sabbath day is still binding on the people of God.

First, the matter of the Sabbath day is addressed directly in the fourth chapter of Hebrews. *“For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into*

*not* enter the “rest” God associated with the seventh day! If the cessation of creative labor on the seventh day is the “rest” to which our text refers, we cast are upon the horns of a dilemma. The Lord said Israel did not enter His rest, yet they did keep the Sabbath day holy, as He commanded (though with much inconsistency). God declared, *“They (the unbelievers) shall never enter My rest!”*

The point is not merely that they did not enter, but that they “could not” enter! It was no longer offered to them! It was not accessible to them. However, the seventh day was offered to them—yea, it was commanded they keep it, and do so in a holy manner. The most diligent Sabbath keepers in Israel, however, did not enter into God’s real Sabbath rest! That is a matter of revelation.

The Lord is not speaking of a ritual, but of a condition. He is not referring to a procedure, but to a culmination. It is more than interesting that in Hebrews 3:11,18, and 4:1,3,5,10, and 11, the word “rest” is translated from the Greek word *κατάπαυσις*, which means ceasing from ones work or activity . . . rest. However, in the ninth verse, another word is used. *“There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God”* (NASB, NIV, NRSV). The word used here is *σαββατισμός*, which means a spiritual rest, a rest. This is a use of the word from which the word “Sabbath” comes, and is the only place in the New Covenant writings where it is found. Notice, it is yet to be **inhabited**, not observed! It is something into which we “enter,” not something we keep.

**Two Kinds of Rest**

Here, there are at least two kinds of “rest” to be considered. First, a rest from toil and exertion. In this case, “rest” for the weary. This was foreshadowed by the seventh day Sabbath. In that day, there was to be a cessation of normal activity, and provision made for rest and contemplation. This cannot, of course, be applied to God Almighty. There is no need for God to “rest,” in this sense of the word. Creating the world did not fatigue

**By moral law, I mean the commandments by which sin was defined, and through which the knowledge of sin was cultured. Faith establishes the Law by enabling us to fulfill its demands.**

*my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works. And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest. Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief”* (Heb 4:3-6).

Israel did not enter into the rest of God the true Sabbath. This contradicts the doctrine of the Sabbatarians who affirm the seventh day is the proper day of worship. (Many of them affirm that honoring the first day of the week is a Satanic innovation.) If this were the case, Israel would have entered into the sabbath-rest of God, though imperfectly, because they did honor the Sabbath day.

However, it is here declared they did

the Lord!

The other kind of rest is a conclusion--a "rest" because something is completed. This is the "rest" God is said to have had. Both rests pertain to man, but only the latter applies to the Lord. For God, the Sabbath-rest marked the conclusion of the creation of the heavens and the earth. For Israel, the Sabbath-rest marked the conclusion of a week, and the preparation for further toil.

For those in Christ, the Sabbath-rest marks the conclusion of their orientation for glory, when they shall be "conformed to the Image of God's Son" (Rom 8:29), glorified and ready to embark on an eternal reign with the Son of God. That rest "remains" to be enjoyed by the people of God. Now, they enjoy a "rest" from their own labors as a basis for entrance into glory. They now savor

**The Fourth Commandment**

The Ten Commandments are a reflection of the image of God. They are good, and holy, and just, as Romans 7 declares. But they are not the basis for determining whether a person is righteous or not. That is determined by personal faith in Jesus Christ (Rom 4:13; Phil 3:9). As for the Sabbath day, Israel, who received the commandment, never really entered into God's rest, or sabbath. There is a greater rest that was typified by the Law's Sabbath day, but never fulfilled by it. That is the rest of faith, and is discussed at length in the fourth chapter of Hebrews, as I have shown.

A parallel is made between the fourth commandment Sabbath and the rest of faith. The Sabbath day was bound upon Israel because their hearts were hard. They would have forgotten God altogether if He did not demand they remember Him on that day, dedicating it exclusively to Him.

In Christ, however, our nature is changed, so that we actually know and delight in knowing the Lord. Now every day becomes a Sabbath so far as

sanctifying the Lord in our memory. This does not mean keeping the Sabbath is wrong. Nor, indeed, does it mean we are to demand that everyone keep it. Colossians 2:16 forbids us to judge one another on this matter. The recollection of God as the Creator of the universe is wonderful. Intimate fellowship with Him by faith is more wonderful. That is why Scripture affirms, "We which believe do enter into rest" (Heb 4:3). This is a higher and more extensive rest which overshadows, but does not obliterate, the former Sabbath.

**Not Right to Demand Sabbath Keeping**

It is never right to demand that everyone keep the Sabbath day—even

**This is a foundational teaching. The Old Covenant put the entire responsibility in the hands of man. Believing or faith are not mentioned a single time in all of the Law—including all of the commandments, all of the directions, and all of the Levitical law. It was a system of doing.**

though no individual is condemned for choosing to do so. Colossians 2:16 forbids us to judge one another on this matter. The recollection of God as the Creator of the universe is wonderful--but it is certainly not the highest or most glorifying view of our God. Intimate fellowship with Him by faith is more wonderful.

The Sabbath day commandment has not been obviated by a different commandment, but by a greater rest. It is something like the light of the sun removing the light of the moon. That "rest" is nothing less than satisfaction with the atoning death of Christ. When we enter into that "rest," we cease depending on our own accomplishments,

resting, as it were, from them.

**The New Covenant Is Different**

When comparing the New and Old covenants, our approach must be correct. The New Covenant is a different kind of covenant, not at all like the Old Covenant. God said it this way, "I will make a new covenant. . . It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt" (Heb 8:8-9, NIV). The latter part of that chapter confirms this is the covenant Jesus is presently mediating. It is not a covenant of DOING, like the Old Covenant was. In fact, the Spirit makes this parallel in commenting on the nature of the New Covenant. "Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law: The man who does these things will live by them. But the righteousness that is by faith says: Do not say in your heart, Who will ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down) or Who will descend into the deep? (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: That if you confess with your mouth, Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved" (Rom 10:5-10).

This is a foundational teaching. The Old Covenant put the entire responsibility in the hands of man. Believing or faith are not mentioned a single time in all of the Law—including all of the commandments, all of the directions, and all of the Levitical law. It was a system of doing--the doing of men.

In the New Covenant, God does the foundational work, then calls upon us to believe it. He then accepts us upon the basis of our faith, and works with us to fulfill His will (Phil 2:12-13). The entire New Covenant is summarized in a few words. Jeremiah foretold it in Jeremiah 31:31-34. The Spirit later gave it again in Hebrews 8:8-13. It is again summarized in

Hebrews 10:16-17. **In all of these references what the Lord does is the total emphasis.** There are no “Ifs,” and there are no commands.

If you will read those texts, you will find the following affirmations. (1) God will put His laws into the mind. (2) He will write his laws on the heart. (3) He will be God to the people. (4) The people will be His people. (5) Every one in the covenant will know Him, or be familiar and in love with Him. (6) He will not remember their sins any more.

All of those things are promises—promises to be believed. They can only be possessed in Christ. Further, our faith will compel us to do anything and everything He commands us. Other scriptures that affirm the nature of the New Covenant, and how radically it differs from the Old Covenant are as follows. Jeremiah 32:39-40; Ezekiel 11:19-20; 36:26-27; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Ephesians 2:10.

#### **The First Day of the Week**

The “*First day of the week*” is frequently mentioned in Scripture, and always with a note of approval. This is specifically said to be the time when Jesus rose from the dead. “*Now when He rose early on the first day of the week . . .*” (Mark 16:9). This is also the day on which Jesus, following His resurrection, first appeared to His disciples. “*Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, ‘Peace be with you’*” (John 20:19). It is also the day on

which He appeared the second time to His disciples. John refers to it as eight days following the first appearance, which would put it on the first day of the week. “*And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, ‘Peace to you!’*” (John 20:26).

In addition, the day of Pentecost occurred on the first day of the week. This feast took place 50 days after the high Sabbath of the paschal week (Lev 23:15-16). The Sabbath from which the

on setting aside special monies for the poor saints in Jerusalem, Paul specified that it be done on “*the first day of the week*” (1 Cor 16:2). As the church progressed, from Ignatius (A.D. 30-107) onwards, we “have a complete chain of evidence that The Lord’s Day became the regular Christian name for the first day of the week.”

Suffice it to say, there is solid ground for perceiving as “*the Lord’s Day*” the first day of the week. This was the day on which natural light was created (Gen 1:3-5). It was the day on which Christ

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count was made occurred the day after Jesus was crucified, and was the reason why His body was taken down from the cross (John 19:31; Mark 15:42).

It was also the Sabbath honored by the women who came to anoint Jesus’ body (Mark 16:1; Luke 23:54-56). Fifty days from that Sabbath day was the first day of the week--the Day of Pentecost, on which the Spirit was poured forth.

We are categorically told that the early disciples came together to break bread “*on the first day of the week*” (Acts 20:7). When instructing the Corinthians

Jesus arose from the dead (Mark 16:9). His two recorded appearances to His disciples occurred on this day (John 20:19,26). The day of Pentecost took place on this day (Lev 23:15-16), and the early church is said to have gathered together on the “first day of the week” (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:2).

This is not simply another day! The events that took place on the first day of the week are conducive to godly recollections that sanctify the soul. It outshines the Sabbath day, having been blessed with greater occurrences. God did greater things on this day.

## **CONCLUSION**

We have dealt with the very heart of sound doctrine: how the righteousness of God is appropriated. With great power, the Holy Spirit has persuaded us of the need of a righteousness from God. He has announced that “*the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*” (1:18).

There is only one way to avoid being

consumed by that wrath, and that is to be clothed with the righteousness of God. This is not merely a technical point, but a requirement driven by God’s own nature.

Only the Son of God could fulfill the demands of the Law and the purpose of God. Only He could remove sin, destroy the devil, and reconcile us to God. For this reason, God has set Jesus before the world as a propitiation for sin—a means of obtaining His mercy.

When we believe the record God has given of His Son, Jesus takes hold of us, and our faith takes hold of Him. It is then that God imputes His very own righteousness to us, thereby lifting us above the condemnation of the Law. Because of our faith, God receives us.

The “*law of faith*,” by which God’s righteousness is appropriated will not allow men to boast, as though their salvation was the result of their own

doing. The Law of faith “excludes” boasting, moving us to glory in the Lord. We glory in God through Jesus Christ, having no confidence in the flesh.

The religious climate in which we find ourselves makes it exceedingly difficult to take hold of these things. Yet, we must exert ourselves to do so, asking

the Lord to help our unbelief. Christ has brought God’s righteousness within the reach of faith. Praise Him for that, and extend yourself to appropriate it.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 6/16/2000. Continuing in our studies on Romans, we will cover 4:1-4, “ABRAHAM, JUSTIFIED BY FAITH.” God revealed the basis for justification long before the giving of the Law. It was declared in Abraham, and is held before us as proof of its truth. Our meeting will convene at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God.

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