

## Defending Justification by faith

Gal. 3:6-14

TODAY'S MESSAGE IS ON DEFENDING JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

ST. BERNARD OF CLAIR VAUX WROTE,

I believe though I do not comprehend,  
and I hold by faith what I cannot grasp with the mind.

Concepts Today:

What is faith?

How is faith connected to justification?

John R. Stott says,

“Faith is a reasoning trust, a trust which reckons thoughtfully and confidently upon the trustworthiness of God.”

In other words,

“Knowing who He is and what He is like can you trust God?”

Legend has it that a man was lost in the desert, just dying for a drink of water. He stumbled upon an old shack – a ramshackled, windowless, roofless, weatherbeaten old shack. He looked about this place and found a little shade from the heat of the desert sun. As he glanced around he saw a pump about fifteen feet away – an old, rusty water pump. He stumbled over to it, grabbed the handle, and began to pump up and down, up and down. Nothing came out.

Disappointed, he staggered back. He noticed off to the side an old jug. He looked at it, wiped away the dirt and dust, and read a message that said, “You have to prime the pump with all the water in this jug, my friend. P.S.: Be sure you fill the jug again before you leave.”

He popped the cork out of the jug and sure enough, it was almost full of water! Suddenly he was faced with a decision. If he drank the water, he could live. Ah, but if he poured all the water in the old rusty pump, maybe

it would yield fresh, cool water from down deep in the well, all the water he wanted.

He studied the possibility of both options. What should he do, pour it into the old pump and take a chance on fresh, cool water or drink what was in the old jug and ignore its message? Should he waste all the water on the hopes of those flimsy instructions written, no telling how long ago?

Reluctantly he poured all the water into the pump. Then he grabbed the handle and began to pump, squeak, squeak, squeak. Still nothing came out! Squeak, squeak, squeak. A little bit began to dribble out, then a small stream, and finally it gushed! To his relief fresh, cool water poured out of the rusty pump. Eagerly, he filled the jug and drank from it. He filled it another time and once again drank its refreshing contents.

Then he filled the jug for the next traveler. He filled it to the top, popped the cork back on, and added this little note: "Believe me, it really works. You have to give it all away before you can get anything back."

The traveler had to trust a number of things.

He put his life on the line, but in the end his faith saved him.

FAITH HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE GOD-REQUIRED RESPONSE THAT BRINGS SALVATION.

Paul, in his defense of faith for salvation, looks to Abraham.

- 6** Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.
- 7** Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.
- 8** The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, *saying*, "ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU."
- 9** So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.
- 10** For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM."
- 11** Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident;

- for, “THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.”
- 12 However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, “HE WHO PRACTICES THEM SHALL LIVE BY THEM.”
- 13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, “CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE”—
- 14 in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. (Gal. 3:1-14)

**CARRYING OUT A STRATEGIC DEFENSE OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH PAUL BEGINS THIS CHAPTER REMINDING THE GALATIANS OF THEIR EXPERIENCE OF FAITH.**

1. You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publically portrayed as crucified?

YOU BEGAN WITH THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST CRUCIFIED.

2. ...did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

WAS IT BY WORKS OR BY FAITH THAT YOU RECEIVED THE SPIRIT?

5. Does He then, who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

HOW DID YOU EXPERIENCE GOD’S PROVISION OF THE SPIRIT AND HIS MIGHT WORKS OF POWER, BY FAITH OR YOUR WORKS?

**THE NEXT DEFENSE OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH IS BY THE LIFE OF ABRAHAM.**

**1. WHAT FAITH DOES.**

Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD,  
AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. (v. 6)

When Abraham believed God righteousness was credited to him.

**Reckoned** – accounting term meaning to credit to one’s account.

Kathos – *consider, even so*, is a connector of what preceded – their experience, to what follows – the experience of Abraham.

Abraham is a special guy because he is the one God started with

- the acknowledged father and prototype of Israel.

How did Abraham receive God’s blessing and? How was he justified?

Paul’s answer is a quotation from Genesis 15:6,

“Abraham believed God ... and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

Righteousness is God’s own righteousness.

God credited His own righteousness to Abraham, because Abraham’s was inadequate. Just as 2 Cor. 5:21 states,

God made him [Christ] who had no sin to be sin for us,

so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

Paul’s point: since Abraham was justified by faith, so are we.

- 7 Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.

**SINCE ABRAHAM WAS JUSTIFIED BY FAITH, SO EVERYONE IS JUSTIFIED BY FAITH.**

- 8 The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, *saying*, “ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU.”
- 9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.

## **2. WHAT OBEDIENCE TO THE LAW DOES NOT DO:**

The law does not bless us with righteousness, it curses us.

- v. 10 For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, “CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM.”

How can something so good be a curse instead of a blessing?

Those who are under the law are obligated to keep it; and no one can.

*"It is impossible to be justified by the Law!"*

Principle:

1. The law does not justify. It pronounces a curse for all who fail to keep the law in its entirety.
2. No one is justified by law, since the law itself teaches that men are justified by faith.

Boice writes,

"It is a failure to keep the Law that brings man under Gods wrath. There is another way to avoid the wrath of God, as Paul has shown. There is mercy in the work of Christ. Nevertheless, if a man will not come to God on the basis of the atonement made by Christ, he must be judged by his works measured against the law's standard and be condemned."<sup>1</sup>

- 11 Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."
- 12 However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, "HE WHO PRACTICES THEM SHALL LIVE BY THEM."

In Paul's final argument defending justification by faith he focuses the hope we have because of Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

PAUL HAS SHOWN US WHAT FAITH CAN DO – justify all who believe.

PAUL HAS SHOWN US THE LAW DOES NOT DO – It can only condemn.

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<sup>1</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Galatians*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), p. 53.

### 3. PAUL SHOWS WHAT CHRIST HAS DONE FOR US.

- 13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, “CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE”—
- 14 in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. (Gal. 3:13-14)

This is where Paul points to a positive hope in Jesus Christ.

**Redeemed** – exagorazo, a word commonly used of buying a slave’s freedom.

Christ justifies those who believe in Him by buying them back from their slavery to sin.

Peter says that we were “redeemed ...with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ” (1 Peter 1:19).

**The curse of the Law** was the punishment demanded because no man could keep from violating its demands.

Christ took our curse upon Himself as a substitute for sinners and became a curse for us in His crucifixion.

“In ancient Judaism a criminal who was executed, usually by stoning was then tied to a post, a type of tree, where his body would hang until sunset as a visible representation of rejection by God. It was not that a person became cursed by being hanged on a tree but that he was hanged on a tree because he was cursed. Jesus did not become a curse because He was crucified but was crucified because he was cursed in taking the full sin of the world upon Himself.”

“He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed”

(1 Pet. 2:24).

The purpose of Jesus’ sacrifice was to release the blessing of Abraham.

- 14 **in order that** in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might

come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. (Gal. 3:13-14)

## **Purpose (hina)**

### **1. ALL WHO BELIEVE WILL BE JUSTIFIED.**

The blessing of Abraham is righteousness.

“...those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.”

v. 9.

### **2. ALL WHO BELIEVE WILL RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT**

In v. 14 ...receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

FAITH BELIEVES THE MESSAGE: JESUS PAID FOR OUR SINS ON THE CROSS.

“All of this blessing is through faith. Justifying faith involves self-renunciation, putting away all confidence in one’s own merit and works. Like the Israelites who had Pharaoh’s pursuing army behind them and the impassable Red Sea in front of them, the sinner must acknowledge his sinfulness and his total inability to save himself. When he sees God’s justice pursuing him and God’s judgment ahead of him, he realizes his helplessness in himself and realizes he has nowhere to turn but to God’s mercy and grace.”<sup>2</sup>

THE SCRIPTURE IN GALATIANS 3:6-14 DEFENDS KEY AREAS OF THE GOSPEL:

1. **What faith does** – It justifies us
2. **What the law does not do** – It does not justify us, it curses us.
3. **What Christ has done**–He took our curse and died in our place so that we might receive the blessing of Abraham and the Holy Spirit.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN? Simply this, our salvation is based on faith alone. God has accepted us apart from any good works by virtue of Christ’s

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<sup>2</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Galatians*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1987), p. 79.

death on the cross, which paid for our sins. His righteousness and Spirit are ours by grace through faith.

### **Article: What is Reformation Day?**

**A single event on a single day changed the world.** It was October 31, 1517. Brother Martin, a monk and a scholar, had struggled for years with his church, the church in Rome. He had been greatly disturbed by an unprecedented indulgence sale. The story has all the makings of a Hollywood blockbuster. Let's meet the cast.

First, there is the young bishop—too young by church laws—Albert of Mainz. Not only was he bishop over two bishoprics, he desired an additional archbishopric over Mainz. This too was against church laws. So Albert appealed to the Pope in Rome, Leo X. From the De Medici family, Leo X greedily allowed his tastes to exceed his financial resources. So enter the artists and sculptors, Raphael and Michelangelo.

When Albert of Mainz appealed for a papal dispensation, Leo X was ready to deal. Albert, with the papal blessing, would sell indulgences for past, present, and future sins. All of this sickened the monk, Martin Luther. Can we buy our way into heaven? Luther had to speak out.

**But why October 31?** November 1 held a special place in the church calendar as All Soul's Day. On November 1, 1517, a massive exhibit of newly acquired relics would be on display at Wittenberg, Luther's home city. Pilgrims would come from all over, genuflect before the relics, and take hundreds, if not thousands, of years off time in purgatory. Luther's soul grew even more vexed. None of this seemed right.

**Martin Luther**, a scholar, took quill in hand, dipped it in his inkwell and penned his 95 Theses on October 31, 1517. These were intended to spark a debate, to stir some soul-searching among his fellow brothers in the church. The 95 Theses sparked far more than a debate. The 95 Theses also revealed the church was far beyond rehabilitation. It needed a reformation. The church, and the world, would never be the same.

**THE CHURCH'S TRUE TREASURE  
IS THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST.**

One of Luther's 95 Theses simply declares, "THE CHURCH'S TRUE TREASURE IS THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST." That alone is the meaning of Reformation Day. The church had lost sight of the gospel because it had long ago papered over the pages of God's Word with layer upon layer of tradition. **Tradition always brings about systems of works, of earning your way back to God.** It was true of the Pharisees, and it was true of medieval Roman Catholicism. Didn't Christ Himself say, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light?" Reformation Day celebrates the joyful beauty of the liberating gospel of Jesus Christ.

**What is Reformation Day?** IT IS THE DAY THE LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL BROKE FORTH OUT OF DARKNESS. It was the day that began the Protestant Reformation. It was a day that led to Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, and many other Reformers helping the church find its way back to God's Word as the only authority for faith and life and leading the church back to the glorious doctrines of **JUSTIFICATION BY GRACE ALONE THROUGH FAITH ALONE IN CHRIST ALONE.** It kindled the fires of missionary endeavors, it led to hymn writing and congregational singing, and it led to the centrality of the sermon and preaching for the people of God. It is the celebration of a theological, ecclesiastical, and cultural transformation.

So we celebrate Reformation Day. This day reminds us to be thankful for our past and to the Monk turned Reformer. **WHAT'S MORE, THIS DAY REMINDS US OF OUR DUTY, OUR OBLIGATION, TO KEEP THE LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL AT THE CENTER OF ALL WE DO.**<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Article by Stephen Nichols, Ligonier Ministries, Oct. 15, 2015.