

March 22, 2020

## Adult Sunday Bible Study Lesson

### Justification

**Situational Context:** Paul's argument in Chapter 2 now moves to a climax. Condemnation results from failure to obey revelation of whatever kind. Jews have transgressed the Mosaic law in particular, emptying circumcision of its real significance. Paul recognizes the privilege of Jewishness and of circumcision in particular. But physical circumcision is a symbol of sanctification and renewal of life. The reality, not the sign, is the vital thing and may be possessed irrespective of Jewishness.

**Romans 3:1-2 (NIV2011) <sup>1</sup> What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? <sup>2</sup> Much in every way! First of all, the Jews have been entrusted with the very words of God.**

**Lesson Theme:** While the Jews appeal to their possession of the Law as proof of their privileged position before God, Paul has now demonstrated that any Jew's sin is unveiled and condemned, not hidden and condoned, by the Law. At the Last Judgment, all argument with a perfectly just and omniscient Judge will be futile. In Scripture, justification is the opposite of condemnation. It is the declaration of the believing sinner to be just, and it comes about by virtue of the imputed righteousness of Christ, the "gift of righteousness," as Ro 5:17 terms it. Christ's righteousness is now legally considered to be the possession of the sinner. Justification is final and irreversible. It is grounded in Christ's lifelong obedience, in which He fulfilled the precepts of God's law for us, and in His death on the cross, bore the penalty of God's judgment against us. Believers now share the same righteous status as the risen Christ Himself, with whom they are united now and forever.

**1. Justified by Grace: Romans 3:21-24 (NIV2011) <sup>21</sup> But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. <sup>22</sup> This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, <sup>23</sup> for all have**

**sinned and fall short of the glory of God,<sup>24</sup> and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.**

**Interpretation:** God decreed before time to save, justify, a particular people for Himself through the sacrifice of His incarnate Son to all who believe in His Son and trust God's declaration of justification. This trust, faith, is impossible to attain on our own without God's assistance (Rom 3:10-13). It must be received through the gracious action of the Holy Spirit granting faith to the sinner. God determined to grant the righteousness His incarnate Son earned to each person, so granted faith. This righteousness is the basis for God to justify the person eternally. This process demonstrates God's justice and His mercy.

### **Supporting Texts:**

**Proverbs 17:15 (NIV2011)<sup>15</sup> Acquitting the guilty and condemning the innocent—the LORD detests them both.**

**Romans 5:17 (NIV2011)<sup>17</sup> For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!**

**Romans 8:1 (NIV2011)<sup>1</sup> Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,**

**Romans 8:33-34 (NIV2011)<sup>33</sup> Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.<sup>34</sup> Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.**

**2 Corinthians 5:21 (NIV2011)<sup>21</sup> God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**

### **Discussion Starters:**

**How does God's program uphold the Law?**

**Why is God not violating His own word, Proverbs 17:15?**

**Why does God's program not promote sin?**

**2. In Jesus Christ: Romans 3:25-26 (NIV2011) <sup>25</sup> God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— <sup>26</sup> he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.**

**Interpretation:** God's judicial righteousness is demonstrated in the Gospel. Under the Mosaic sacrificial system, forgiveness was offered through (but not on the basis of) animal sacrifice. As the New Testament recognizes, such sacrifices cannot substitute for the sins of humans. The real significance of the Old Testament sacrifices lay in the way they pointed forward to Christ through whom God would deal with human sin in an appropriate and final way. In view of what He would later do, God could righteously pass over "former sins" (v. 25). The work of Christ reveals both the justice of God (He does punish sin in the Person of His own Son, 8:32), and the righteousness of God's way of salvation by "faith in Jesus" (v. 26). In dealing with Christ as sin-bearer and the human person as sinner, God does not compromise His own holiness, nor the necessity of sins being atoned for. Yet, He graciously provides a salvation that mankind was incapable of obtaining. In this respect, Paul sees the Cross as the manifestation of the glorious wisdom of God.

**Supporting Texts:**

**Hebrews 10:1-4 (NIV2011) <sup>1</sup> The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. <sup>2</sup> Otherwise, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. <sup>3</sup> But those sacrifices are an annual**

reminder of sins. <sup>4</sup> It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

**1 Corinthians 1:23-24 (NIV2011) <sup>23</sup> but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, <sup>24</sup> but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.**

**Discussion Starters:**

**What is atonement?**

**How did God leave the people's sins unpunished before Christ?**

**Who sacrificed Christ?**

**Why did God wait until that present time to demonstrate His righteousness?**

**3. Law Upheld: Romans 3:27-31 (NIV2011) <sup>27</sup> Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. Because of what law? The law that requires works? No, because of the law that requires faith. <sup>28</sup> For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. <sup>29</sup> Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, <sup>30</sup> since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. <sup>31</sup> Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.**

**Interpretation:** Since Jew and Gentile alike are under wrath for their sin, and since the law does not protect Jews, but rather reveals their condemnation, and since the gospel exposes a person's unrighteousness while revealing God's righteousness, no one, not even a Jew, has grounds for boasting. Indeed, boasting "is excluded," since faith alone (vv. 27, 28, 30), not human achievement, brings salvation.

## **Supporting Texts:**

**Romans 4:2-3 (NIV2011) <sup>2</sup> If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. <sup>3</sup> What does Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”**

**Galatians 2:16 (NIV2011) <sup>16</sup> know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.**

## **Discussion Starters:**

**What is God’s deal with our boasting?**

**What good is the Law now?**

**4. Faith Required: Romans 4:1-3 (NIV2011) <sup>1</sup> What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, discovered in this matter? <sup>2</sup> If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. <sup>3</sup> What does Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”**

**Interpretation:** Contrary to the view that Abraham was considered righteous and sustained in covenant with God on the basis of his obedience and faithfulness, Paul intends to demonstrate that the general statement in Ro 3:27 is true of Abraham in particular. Abraham had nothing "to boast about," for Ge 15:6 proves that it was by faith, not by law-keeping, that he was counted righteous.

## **Supporting Texts:**

**1 Corinthians 1:31 (NIV2011) <sup>31</sup> Therefore, as it is written: “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.”**

**Hebrews 11:8-9 (NIV2011) <sup>8</sup> By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did**

**not know where he was going.<sup>9</sup> By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise.**

**Discussion Starters:**

**Why is this text about Abraham important?**