

HIS SIDE VERSUS OUR SIDE - OVERVIEW OF GALATIANS

Or, What is a TRUE Christian?

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CHAPTER 8

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH PLUS NOTHING - GALATIANS 3:24

What is justification by faith? Christians say that it is the essence of the gospel. How can Christians claim to be saved without doing a thing but believe?

This study will answer that question - and in so doing, bring assurance and security to the heart of GOD's people.

"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" -- Galatians 3:24

The sum of all the antitheses (or paradoxes) we have considered is in the caption of this study. They compel the conclusion that GOD has left us to but one way into His favor, namely, by faith and by faith alone.

If we resolve to do our very best, all that we can do leaves us under law with its unmet demands, therefore under the curse of the law, even death and condemnation. We are still on Our Side, with no ability to get ourselves out of our trouble. Only faith will transfer us to His Side, where He can deal with us in grace, as His own children, heirs of His gracious promises, partakers of His own life, possessed of His HOLY SPIRIT.

This conclusion is definite and decisive, with no middle ground, sealed to us by this solemn, summary declaration: **"But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe"** (3:22). So important is this statement.

If the Bible speaks GOD's mind, and it does, then all who think to commend themselves to GOD by their conduct, all who seek to come into His favor by trying to be good, are simply trying to get out of prison. They are guilty of attempted jail-break! They are making their condition worse, inviting a more severe sentence. There is but one way out.

What is Justification by Faith?

All that man can do leaves him helplessly on Our Side, lawfully "imprisoned under sin." If anything is to be done about it GOD will have to do it. So the Scriptures mercilessly show man his condition that, ceasing from his own doings, he may fasten his attention upon what GOD has done -- done to lift man over onto His Side, justified from all these ugly charges against him.

Justification, then, has three steps:

1. Man has sinned, and GOD declares "**all under sin**," deserving the death penalty.
2. GOD provided a Sinless One, having no need to die for Himself but purposing to take our death penalty upon Himself. This He did, and GOD accepted of His death, in that He raised Him from the dead.
3. All who will accept what He has done for them and come over "**into Christ**" GOD is free to declare righteous in His sight and deal with them as such. By faith they have changed sides; they are now on His Side, in His favor.

That is, justification is a declarative act on GOD's part. He has DECLARED us all sinners "**in Adam**"; now He is free to DECLARE us all righteous "**in Christ**." Faith alone can make the transfer.

The Westminster divines stated it well: "Justification is an act of GOD's free grace, wherein He pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us at righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of CHRIST imputed to us, and received by faith alone."

This statement is supported by many Scriptures, such as: Ephesians 1:7; Romans 3:24; 4:6; 5:18; Galatians 2:16; II Corinthians 5:21. "**By faith alone**" is especially enforced by these:

"Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law"; "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Romans 3:28; 4:4, 5).

It is clearly evident that GOD's plan is such as admits of no admixture of man's efforts: on man's part they are futile; on GOD's part they are an offered affront.

Why is the "**faith alone**" principle so offensive to man? Why does he so persistently revert to the law principle? Faith alone hurts his pride; law affords him an opportunity to do something. He will accept GOD's plan of salvation if only he can do something toward it. GOD says, No. Take it by faith, or leave it alone.

The Gospel Paul Preached

The preaching that brought salvation to these Galatian Christians is recorded in Acts 13:14-43. Having first of all obtained audience with the children of Israel, Paul rehearsed with them GOD's

dealings with their fathers through Moses and David, leading on to David's greater Son, pointing out that they had fulfilled the Scripture in putting Him on the cross, but that GOD had also fulfilled the Scripture in raising Him from the dead. Having dwelt upon these two great saving facts -- **"Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification"** -- Paul comes quickly to his conclusion, that salvation is to be had only in Him:

"Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38, 39).

Note the two alls: **"All . . . justified from all"**; something which no law and no adherence to law could accomplish. Why?

Law's Fatal Futility

The great desideratum of human existence is "life". There is nothing man values so highly as life. Not having life, he has nothing. At any cost man must have life.

The indictment of law is that it cannot meet this, man's greatest need; it cannot produce life. Man is spiritually dead -- **"dead in trespasses and sins"** -- and law leaves him dead. Do, do, do all that the law demands, yet all the doing fails to generate a spark of life. So we read: **"If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law"** (Galatians 3:21).

The notable fact is that man, in a scientific age, has never been able by scientific process to produce life. GOD still holds the secret of life within His own wisdom and power, yes, within Himself.

GOD is life; GOD is its source.

Man's story is that he began with God-breathed life. GOD **"breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul"** (Genesis 2:7). The life man had was GOD's life, God-breathed, God-imparted. GOD was its source. But man allowed Satan and sin to separate him from GOD, from his source of life, even though he was warned, **"in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"** (Genesis 2:17). That day his spiritual life was ended, and his physical life was shortened to a brief span of years.

That is man's history, history of death, death, death, death, and with death, darkness. What he desperately needs is life, and the light which life alone enables him to see.

So, now, **"what the law could not do ... God sending His own Son"** delivered us from the state of death by placing us under the control of the Spirit's life: **"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law -- the control -- of sin and death"** (Romans 8:3,2, with 7:24).

So the Gospel is this: the same GOD who breathed life into man at the beginning brings the Good News to life-bereft man, saying, **"I am come that they might have life"** (John 10:10). **"I**

am the life" (John 14:6). (Read the gospel of John for its oft-repeated "life"). Even Jesus' words are words of life (John 6:63).

How shall we obtain this life? Work for it? No, indeed; even our physical life did not come that way. Be good for it? We have no goodness; that comes with the life. No, it must be a gift. **"I give unto them eternal life"; "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"** (John 10:28; Romans 6:23).

If not of works, then it must be by faith alone -- faith PLUS nothing. **"To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness"** (Romans 4:5): **"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast"** (Ephesians 2:8,9).

Law's Time Limit -- "Until"

There is a further argument against resorting to law and its works: it was meant to serve a merely temporary purpose, a sort of stop-gap provision. Given four hundred and thirty years after GOD, by His dealings with Abraham on the basis of grace, had established the principle of Justification by Faith, the question is raised as to why it was given at all. The answer is: **"It was added because of transgressions, till the seed -- Seed -- should come to whom the promise was made"** (Galatians 3:19).

Elsewhere we read, **"By the law is the knowledge of sin"** (Romans 3:20), that is, it makes us conscious that we are sinners: **"that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful"** (Romans 7:13). Naturally we think well of our conduct until the law shows us up. Recently I parked my car in a perfectly good spot; then I noticed a sign. Walking back I read its prohibition of such parking. Had I left my car there that law would have made me a conscious transgressor. So the law shut us all up under sin, making us deeply conscious of our need of a Saviour.

"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24). It has served its purpose; it has taught us our need; it has delivered us over to CHRIST, who, as the Giver of life, has in turn delivered us from the power of death and darkness unto **"the justification of life."**

Dear reader, if you are still on Our Side, depending on self-effort or fancied personal goodness, realize that all such is futile. Only justification of life through faith in CHRIST will transfer you to His Side and to His favor. GOD's salvation is such that you must be justified by faith alone, or leave it alone.

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