

Justification By Faith #1

By Bill Denton

INTRODUCTION

A. Illustration

There are only two kinds of religion in the world ... You can list every "ism," every cult, every religion in southern California under one category. They all say, "Do, do, do." Only Christianity says, "Done." Christ has done it all.

-- J. Vernon McGee, from The Best of Vernon McGee. Christianity Today

B. One of the terrible misunderstandings of our day is one at the heart of Christianity

1. In the effort to combat what we think are religious and theological errors, we end up making a worse error ourselves
2. What I mean is that we turn the gospel of God's grace and mercy into a salvation earned by the sweat of our own brow, getting things "right," and living up to some perceived divine standard
3. I do not think we intend to do this, but it is the end result
 - a. our focus is more often on what we do rather than what God did
 - b. we are more interested in whether or not we "get it right," or "did it right" than whether God made us right

C. People today have about as weak and ineffective view of faith as one could imagine

1. One person thinks faith means just what we believe
2. Another person argues that faith is more, but somehow we shift faith from a trusting compliance to God to a demand for perfect behavior
3. It's even come to the point where we hesitate to accept plain Bible statements dealing with salvation
 - a. Ephesians 2:8 -- For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; NASU
 - b. many are not comfortable at all with such statements, for it seems to them that we have left something out, some effort or work on our part that finally achieves salvation
 - c. we're afraid that we're going to slip into some theological error unless we put a focus on our own participation -- not a bad thing at all until we change what we provide to something other than real, biblical faith

D. There is a wonderfully important biblical doctrine called justification by faith

1. It is a doctrine that we need to understand better, and make more important
2. It, too, has been the subject of misunderstanding and misemphasis
3. Over the next few weeks, I want to examine this idea to see what the Bible says

I. THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR THE IDEA OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

A. Basically, I just want us to see the claim of scripture regarding justification by faith

1. Either it is a biblical idea or not
2. If it is a biblical idea, then our task ought to be to try to understand it, appreciate it
3. Let's do that today by looking at several key passages from the writings of the apostle Paul

B. Note these verses on the idea of justification by faith

1. Romans 2:13 -- for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified. NASU
 - a. at first glance, this appears to be a statement addressing our issue, but a closer look reveals the opposite
 - b. how would one be justified in God's sight by law? -- only by keeping the law, all of the law
 - c. James 2:10 -- For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. NASU
 - d. we can immediately see our problem – none of us have kept God's law perfectly, as Paul testified in Rom 3 (all have sinned and fall short of God's glory)
2. Romans 3:20 -- because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. NASU
 - a. law cannot justify us because it's real purpose was simply to reveal sin
 - b. no person is justified by keeping a law where the demand is perfection
3. Romans 3:24 -- being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; NASU
 - a. justification is a gift, not something we earn or deserve
 - b. that's the essence of grace, for grace can neither be earned or deserved and remain grace
 - c. whatever role faith plays in our salvation, it is not an earning agent
4. Romans 3:28 -- 28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law. NASU
 - a. here is Paul's foundational statement regarding faith – it is the means by which we are justified
 - b. by faith, we are made right with God
 - 1) Rom 1:16-17 -- For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH." NASU
 - 2) Rom 3:27-28 -- Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law. NASU
 - 3) justification is always a matter of faith, not human achievement

C. Paul's illustration of Abraham's justification demonstrates the point (Rom 4:1ff)

1. Romans 4:2 -- For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. NASU
2. Paul's point is that whatever you can say about Abraham, he didn't earn his justification – his “work” of merit simply didn't even come into consideration
3. What God wanted from Abraham was faith
 - a. belief
 - b. trust
 - c. compliance
 - d. reliance
4. Rom 4:22-24 -- Therefore IT WAS ALSO CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. Now not for his sake only was it written that it was credited to him, but for our sake also, to whom it will be credited, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, NASU
 - a. it is for us this lesson was intended
 - b. what God really wants from us is our faith

D. Here are additional passages, each making an important statement about justification by faith

1. Romans 3:30 -- since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one. NASU
 - a. both circumcised and uncircumcised will be justified by faith
 - b. that's another way of saying Jew and Gentile
2. Romans 5:1 -- Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, NASU
 - a. peace with God is dependent on our being justified by faith
 - b. if there is no justification by faith, then neither is peace a reality
3. Galatians 2:16 -- 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, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified. NASU
 - a. this is a restatement of the fundamental argument presented in Romans
 - b. justification is simply not something we can achieve for ourselves
4. Galatians 5:4 -- You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. NASU
 - a. interestingly, this verse is often used to prove the possibility of falling from grace, but look closely at who it is that falls from grace
 - b. it is the person who attempts to be justified on the basis of keeping law

II. IMPLICATIONS OF BEING JUSTIFIED BY FAITH AND NOT BY MERITORIOUS ACTIONS

- A. It puts the proper emphasis in the proper place – on Christ and the effectiveness of his Sacrifice on the cross, and not on ourselves
- B. It magnifies, praises, and extols the work of God on our behalf, and does not leave any room For bragging on ourselves
- C. It validates the fact of man's total ruin by sin, and our inability to resolve the problem; instead It takes the work of God on our behalf to solve the problem of sin
- D. Faith allows grace to be exactly what it is – a free gift
- E. Faith believes in, trusts, relies upon, and complies with the will of God, not to produce Justification by our efforts, but to appropriate it from the gracious hand of God
- F. We should not deny biblical truth just because we think others may have taught it wrongly, or That some popular doctrine with which we disagree often goes under the same heading; rather, we should simply understand God's word properly
- G. Justification by faith is one of the most encouraging doctrines in scripture, for it is by grace Through faith that we are saved from sin, justified (made right) with the Father, and inherit All the promises of God

CONCLUSION

- A. The heart and soul of justification by faith is the message that Jesus died to save you from Your sins
- B. It is the message that he rose from the grave to bring you life and immortality
- C. Put your faith into him today, believing, trusting, relying, and complying with God's will
 1. Repent of sins
 2. Confess Jesus
 3. Be baptized
 4. Live as a person of faith
- D. You will be saved