

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

INTRODUCTION

A. Outline of Romans

1. Introduction (1:1-17)
2. The need for God's righteousness (1:18-3:20)
3. The provision of righteousness from God (3:21-4:25)
 - a. A description of justification (3:21-26)
 - b. Introductory comments on justification by faith in Christ alone (3:27-31)
 - c. A defense of justification by faith from the Old Testament (4:1-25)
 - 1) Abraham was justified by faith (1-5)
 - 2) David was justified by faith (6-8)

B. Comments on Romans 3:27 -31

1. Douglas Moo, *For we hear no more in 3:27–4:25 about the atonement, or the demonstration of God's righteousness, or the provision for sins under the Old Covenant . . . Faith is the topic in every paragraph of this section of the letter . . .*
2. William Barclay, *If the way to God is the way of faith and of acceptance, then all boasting in human achievement is gone. There was a certain type of Judaism which kept a kind of profit and loss account with God. In the end, people often came to a frame of mind in which they rather held that God was in their debt.*
3. Paul addresses such boasting in this section.

ROMANS 3:27-31, INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS ON JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH IN CHRIST ALONE

A. Boasting is excluded because justification is by the law of faith (27-28)

1. Paul's first rhetorical question and answer (27a), *Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded.*
 - a. Is there room for boasting in oneself when it comes to justification?
 - 1) Jews had received the privilege of being a people set apart by God to represent those who following the true God but privilege led to pride.
 - 2) *boasting*
 - a) It is *pride one has in something, in oneself, in one's position.*
 - b) James 4:16, *As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.*
 - c) Romans 2:17-20, *But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law; and if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth—*
 - d) Romans 2:23, *You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law.*
 - 3) Robert Mounce, *One would think that the sinner would love to be forgiven at no cost. Unfortunately that is not the case. After all, sinners have their pride. They desperately want to claim some role in their own redemption.*
 - 4) John Stott, *Boasting is the language of our fallen self-centeredness.*
 - b. There is no room for boasting in oneself when it comes to justification.
 - 1) Group privilege never excludes personal accountability for Jews and Gentiles.
 - 2) Personal effort is never a part of the equation of justification.
 - a) Ephesians 2:8-9, *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*
 - b) Romans 3:24, *and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,*
 - c) Douglas Moo, *It is not the Jew's pride in a covenant relationship with God, but the pride in accomplishments, the tendency for the Jew to think that his obedience to the law constituted some kind of claim on God, that Paul rejects. . . There is nothing at all wrong with doing the law, according to Paul. The problem, rather, is when doing the law is regarded as an achievement on the basis of which a relationship with God could be established or maintained.*

- 3) All boasting for Christians is excluded except for boasting in Jesus Christ.
 - a) 1 Corinthians 1:31, *so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."*
 - b) Galatians 6:14, *But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*
 - c) John Stott, *Praising, not boasting, is the characteristic activity of justified believers, and will be throughout eternity.*
 - d) Warren Wiersbe, *The swimmer, when he is saved from drowning, does not brag because he trusted the lifeguard. What else could he do? When a believing sinner is justified by faith, he cannot boast of his faith, but he can boast in a wonderful Saviour.*

2. Paul's second rhetorical question and answer (27b-28), ***By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.***
 - a. On what principle is one justified? Is it by the principle of works?
 - 1) *law*
 - a) Here, the word *law* is better translated as *principle*.
 - b) It means a *principle or rule prescribing what a person must do*.
 - 2) Paul questions whether the principle of law can justify a person with God.

 - b. Paul responds to his rhetorical question by declaring justification comes not by the principle of law but the principle of faith.
 - 1) The principle of works is the law which can not justify.
 - a) The purpose of the law was to condemn not to justify.
 - b) Romans 3:20, *For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.*
 - c) Tom Constable, *Salvation by works rests on keeping the Mosaic Law. This does not mean that the Mosaic Law required works for salvation but that those who hope to earn salvation by their works look to the Mosaic Law as what God requires.*
 - d) Handley Moule, *The harlot, the liar, the murderer, are short of it [sc. God's glory]; but so are you. Perhaps they stand at the bottom of a mine, and you on the crest of an Alp; but you are as little able to touch the stars as they.*
 - 2) The principle of faith alone justifies apart from the principle of works.
 - a) *For*
 - 1] This introduces the reason for the statement in verse 27a.
 - 2] Boasting is excluded unless it is directed toward Christ.
 - b) *we hold*
 - 1] It means *to reckon, affirm*.
 - 2] Paul's declaration is in accord with all who have experienced justification through faith in Christ alone.
 - 3] This is the core of the Gospel not Paul's attempt to change how one can be right with God.
 - c) Justification only comes through the work of Jesus Christ.
 - 1] Douglas Moo, . . . *no works, whatever their nature or their motivation, can play any part in making a sinner right with God.*
 - 2] Martin Luther turned the church back to Biblical truth when he based the reformation on *sola fide (faith alone)*.
 - 3] Ephesians 2:8-9, *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*
 - 4] Acts 4:12, *And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*

B. Everyone is justified through faith alone (29-30)

1. Paul's third and fourth rhetorical questions (29a), ***Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also?***

- a. Paul continues to address the Jews in verse 29 as he did in verses 27-29.
- b. Here, he asks if God is only the God of the Jews and not God of the Gentiles, as well.
- c. Tom Constable, *If justification is by the Law, God must be the God of the Jews only since God only gave the Law to the Jews.*
- d. John Witmer, *Because the Gentiles worshiped false gods through idols, the Jews concluded that Yahweh, the true and living God (Jer. 10:10), was the God of Jews only.*
- e. Grant Osborne, *The belief in the one God (monotheism) was at the heart of Judaism, but the Jews thought he favored them and only had a true relationship with them. Gentiles could only have a part in the one God by accepting the law of Moses and circumcision.*

2. Paul's answer (29b-30), ***Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.***

- a. Paul declares that God is the God of all mankind, Jews, and Gentiles.
 - 1) Romans 10:12, *For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him.*
 - 2) John Witmer, *Before God called Abraham and his descendants in the nation Israel to be His Chosen People (Deut. 7:6) God dealt equally with all people. And even after God's choice of Israel to be His special people, God made it plain (e.g., in the Book of Jonah) that He is the God of everyone, Gentiles as well as Jews.*
- b. He is setting the premise that the God of all mankind has only one way of salvation for everyone.
 - 1) Faith is the way of salvation not works.
 - 2) Much has been written concerning Paul's use of two different prepositions, *by faith* for Jews and *through faith* for Gentiles.
 - a) They may both be understood to mean *as a result of*.
 - b) Consider an excellent translation by Grant Osborne, *God ... will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.*
 - 3) Grant Osborne, *... in the Abrahamic covenant and in Isaiah, the Jews were especially chosen to be a source of God's blessing to the Gentiles. Since Christ died for all, the Gentile is just as acceptable as the Jew for salvation.*
 - a) Genesis 12:3, *I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*
 - b) Isaiah 49:6b, *I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.*
 - 4) John Stott, *At the foot of Christ's cross and through faith in him, we are all on exactly the same level, indeed sisters and brothers in Christ.*

C. The law is upheld by faith (31)

1. Paul's fifth rhetorical question (31a), ***Do we then overthrow the law by this faith?***

- a. Paul asked whether the law is overthrown by faith.
- b. *Overthrow* means *to make ineffective, to render purposeless.*

2. Paul's answer (31b), ***By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.***

- a. He strongly objects that the law has no purpose.
- b. He declared that faith upholds the law.
 - 1) *Uphold* means *to acknowledge validity of something.*
 - 2) Douglas Moo, *That Paul affirms here a continuing role for the law, despite its playing no part in justification, is clear.*

- 3) This must be understood in light of the true purpose of the law.
 - a) It was given to show man his sinfulness and not as a means of salvation, Romans 3:20, *For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.*
 - b) Tom Constable, *The purpose of the law was not to provide people with a series of steps that would lead them to heaven. It was to expose their inability to merit heaven.*
 - c) Galatians 3:24, *So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.*

- 4) Also, I believe Christianity upholds the law based on the life and work of Christ.
 - a) Jesus declared in Matthew 5:17, *Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.*
 - b) Jesus fulfilled the law through His sinless life, note Romans 10:4, *For Christ is the end (culmination) of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.*
 - c) Christians fulfill the law through Jesus' payment on the cross for our sins in exchange for His righteousness.
 - d) Romans 8:3-4, *For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*
 - e) Grant Osborne, . . . *in Christ the law has not been nullified but fulfilled. Christ has completed the law in himself, and so when we turn to Christ in faith, we fulfill or keep the law in its entirety.*

CONCLUSION

Grant Osborne, *Christ purchased our salvation, and it is our place to turn to him in faith (27–31) and accept his payment for us. It is impossible to overstate the importance of faith as the only basis for knowing God. A me-oriented salvation centering on works will never be enough to produce salvation. We can never earn eternal life for ourselves. The necessity of faith will be the central theme of chapter 4 as well.*