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January 23, 2019: “Justified by Faith—Part II!”

I Prayer

II Overview and Objectives

This evening’s Bible Study picks-up exactly where our last one ended. We continue our analysis of Paul’s letter to the church at Rome. During our last session, we explored Romans 1 & 2. This evening, we continue our exploration with chapters 3 & 4.

Please recall that whereas Peter was Jesus’s chosen apostle to the Jews, Paul was Jesus’s chosen apostle to the Gentiles. It is widely believed that Romans was Paul’s last epistle, written during a time he was resting for three months in Corinth (Acts 20:2-3). Please also recall that, at the time Paul wrote Romans, he had yet to actually visit the congregation (1:11-13). Roman’s key focus is Paul’s theology of “Justification by Faith.” In addressing divisions between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians, Paul’s underlying point is that all have sinned, Jew and Gentile alike, and neither can be saved without faith in Jesus. For Paul, therefore, justification and/or salvation do not come from following the law (Jews); they come from faith (Jews *and* Gentiles).

We previously noted how salvation came first to Jews, then to Gentiles (recall our discussions on Acts 2 and 10: Peter first preached to Jewish Christians on Pentecost (Acts 2) and Gentiles ultimately joined the church after Cornelius’s baptism (Acts 10)). Further, in Gal. 3:26-28, Paul addressed the issue of Gentiles having to first “follow the law” (circumcision) before becoming Christians. Paul’s theology is that Jesus died *for all*; therefore, the circumcised (Jewish) and uncircumcised (Gentile) alike *are both* saved/justified by faith instead of the law.

Additionally, please recall that in concluding chapter 2, Paul addressed circumcision more so from a symbolic perspective, diminishing its literal significance in favor of its spiritual significance (Romans 2:25-29—read out loud). It is from here we pick-up.

III Reflective Matters for Consideration

As we proceed through chapters 3 and 4, please consider how the following apply to you:

- Are you saved because of your actions or because of Jesus (i.e., can you “boast”)?
- What would be similar to today’s version of Paul’s “Jews and Gentiles,” with respect to your Christian beliefs and membership in the church?
- As a follow-up to the previous question, did Jesus come for some or for all? What does that have to do with you following “the law?”

IV Textual Examination (reading select portions of Romans 3 and 4)

- In 3:1-6, Paul asks whether human *faithlessness* nullifies God's *faithfulness*. What do you think? Do we "earn" salvation by our actions/works/following the law or is it a gift (discussion: John Calvin's "Penal Substitution Theory" and more liberationist "Christ as Victor" theory)? Paul also seems to suggest here that we get "better" than we deserve? What do you think?



- In 3:9-18, Paul cites several passages from Psalms (14:1-3; 5:9; 140:3; 10:7; and 36:1), as well as Isaiah (59:7-8), to support his proposition that *all* have sinned, Jew *and* Gentile alike. In knowing what you do about Paul, why do you think Paul cites scripture to support his argument? In verse 20 Paul

says there's no justification under the law (please pull Gal 2:15-16). What do you think he means?

- 3:22-23 gives us the popularly used, "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God!" Verse 24 goes on to share that we are justified by his "grace" as a gift . . . through Jesus (discussion of Wesleyan theology of G.R.A.C.E. and reconsideration of Calvin's Penal Substitution Theory). Where do you come out?



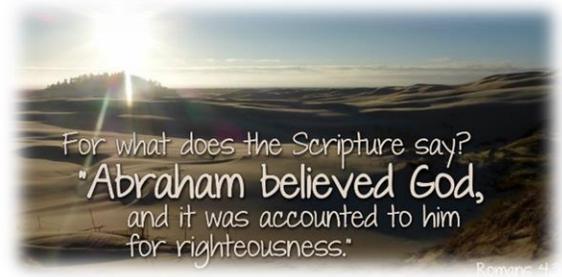
Do James and Paul contradict

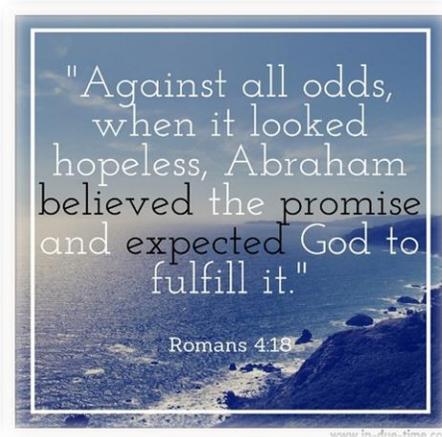


one another?

- 3:27-31 provides that God is for Jews and Gentiles alike. Paul asks why do we uphold the law? As applied to us, if Jesus came for all, why then do we do good for others (e.g., Sister Common and the feeding ministry)? In other words, "we (should) uphold the law with our works/actions!" Question: Does this conflict with James 2:14-17? Why or why not?

- In 4:1-5, Paul suggests that Abraham was "reckoned" to God, not because of his works, but because of his faith (pull Gen. 15:2-6 & Gal. 3:5-9). What do you think? Was Abraham blessed because he followed the law or because of his faith?





- 4:22-24 speaks to the importance of faith. How important is faith in your life? Has faith brought you through things? Has faith “made a way out of no way?” Did you receive these blessings because of your works/deeds/following the law **or** because of your faith? Please explain . . .

V Follow-up Questions?

VI Closing Prayer

- Remember, Paul’s entire argument is that Jesus came for *all*, Jew *and* Gentile alike. In 4:9-12, we again visit Abraham’s blessing. Was it because he followed the law (circumcision) or because of his faith (please pull Gen. 17:10-14)? [Paul answers in v. 13]. How then do you think we receive blessings today, by deeds/works? By faith? By both?

- In 4:16-18, Paul emphasizes that “grace” comes to those who follow the law as well as those who have faith like Abraham. How has “grace” entered your life, through faith or works?

