Justification by Works versus Justification by Faith
Romans 3 – 4
Justification (Salvation) by Works versus Justification (Salvation) by Faith
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Why is this important?

1. One of the greatest differences in religious teaching concerning what to do to be saved from past sins surrounds this subject.

2. Some doctrines state that belief only is necessary for salvation.

3. Some confuse "works" in Romans 3-4 by which we are not justified with "works" in James 2:14-26 by which we are justified.

4. Confusion over quality & quantity of good versus bad done in one's life & how it "balances" in judgment. Remember, one (1) unforgiven sin separates us from God (James 2:10).
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HELPFUL DEFINITIONS
Paul used words in Romans & Galatians whose definitions need to be given in simple terms. Keep these in mind.

Law -- A rule of conduct laid down by authority. Can be positive (require) or negative (prohibit). By its very nature it does not “save.”

“Works of law” (Rom. & Gal.) -- Perfect obedience.
(“Works,” James 2:14-26) -- Active obedience.

Sin -- Transgression of law, any Divine Law (I Jno. 3:4).

Justify (justification) -- To pronounce one just, or righteous, to declare one not guilty; a sentence of acquittal.

Righteousness -- The character or quality of being absolutely right; guiltless.

Faith -- Belief or confidence leading to and often including obedience (note ch. 1:5; 16:26).
Romans 3 & 4 discuss the question: How can a man be right with God?

Since the question involves God, and the God of all the earth must do right (Gen. 18:24), it must be a plan that upholds the righteousness, holiness, and justice of God.

Therefore, the question is also: How can God be right(eous) when He says that the unrighteous (sinners) are righteous (justified)?
Romans 3 & 4 discuss the question: How can a man be right with God?

**Two Possibilities:**

1. **WORKS**

   -- What kind? Works that put God in man’s debt (Rom. 4:4). **Perfect works:** Explained → Man has always kept God’s law, has never made one mistake.

   -- Gal. 3:10 commentary – “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in **all things** which are written in the book of the law, to do them.”

   -- One who does all the law all the time!

   -- Since he lives his whole life without committing one sin, he “works” and is righteous. None has done this! If one had, he never sinned & is **righteous**!
Two Possibilities:

2. FORGIVENESS

One’s sins are washed away when he hears & obeys the gospel (Acts 22:16). -- He is forgiven!
Romans 3 & 4 discuss the question: How can a man be right with God?

Considered in Bookkeeping Terms:

1. God keeps a record on everyone. The man who keeps God’s law perfectly “works,” is “righteous” & has always been. God puts down on his account (imputes, reckons) -- **RIGHTTEOUSNESS**

2. In case of forgiveness, one has sinned (in context, he did not “work” --keep everything perfectly). God puts down on his account (imputes, reckons) **UNRIGHTTEOUSNESS** (He is a **SINNER**).
   -- But when he hears & obeys the gospel, his sins are **FORGIVEN**. Since they are no longer on his record, he is said to be **“RIGHTTEOUS.”**
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**On what Basis Does God Forgive Sins?**

1. Some claim there is no need for any basis, that God is able to do anything He pleases because He is God. 
   → **Not True!** God cannot lie (Heb. 6:18)!
   -- Any consideration of God’s *nature* must include His holiness, justice & righteousness.

2. Rom. 3:21-26…
   -- shows that while man has sinned, through faith in God’s plan (the redemption that is in Christ Jesus), man’s sins can be propitiated (appeased, forgiven). Therefore, God’s righteousness is upheld & He is thereby just (righteous) and at the same time the justifier of those who have faith in Jesus (Rom. 3:26).
Romans 3 & 4 discuss the question: How can a man be right with God? Two Systems of Justification under discussion.

1. **By Works of Law**

   *Law* can only *justify* (pronounce innocent) the one who has kept the law perfectly (Gal. 3:10; Rom. 10:5). Acquittal is *owed* such a person because he is innocent. His acquittal is a matter of *debtor*, not *grace*.

2. **By Faith in Christ**

   The *gospel* reveals how God *justifies* one who believes in Christ (Rom. 1:16-17). He is pronounced *righteous*, not on the ground that he is innocent, but on the ground that God has *forgiven* him. Therefore, his acquittal is a *gift* of God, and a matter of *grace*, not *debtor*. 
Romans 3 & 4 discuss the question: How can a man be right with God? Two Systems of Justification under discussion.

Romans 4 gives 2 illustrations using 2 prominent Jews to show that Justification (salvation) comes to a person who: 1) Believes God’s plan, & 2) Is forgiven.

1. Abraham (justified before the Law & before he was circumcised) by his faith.
How Justification by Faith is Illustrated in Abraham’s Life – Romans 4

Gen. 12
3 Prom.

Gen. 15:6
Just. By Faith
& counted
Righteous

Gen. 17:9-14
Covenant of
Circumcision
given

Exodus 20
10 Commandments
& Law Given

Abraham was justified by Faith before either Circumcision or the giving of the Law!

430 Years from Promises to Giving of Law – Gal. 3:17
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1. Abraham (justified before the Law & before he was circumcised) by his faith.

2. David based on forgiveness (Rom. 4:6-8, as quoted from Ps. 32:1-2).
JUSTIFICATION

By works of the law is Meritorious (Rom. 4:4) versus By faith in Christ is Gratuitous (Rom. 3:24)
As of the sinless (Rom. 3:10) versus As of the sinful (Rom. 4:5)

HENCE IS

1. Without pardon (Rom. 3:30) versus 1. Through pardon (Rom. 4:6-8)
2. Without grace (Rom. 4:4) versus 2. By grace (Rom. 3:24)
3. Without Christ (Gal. 2:21) versus 3. Through Christ (Rom. 3:24)
4. Without faith (Rom. 4:14) versus 4. By faith (Rom. 3:28)
5. Without obedience of faith (Rom. 4:14) versus 5. Through the obedience of faith (Rom. 4:12)

RESULTING IN

1. Occasion of boasting (Rom. 4:2) versus Exclusion of boasting (Rom. 3:27)
   and
2. Reward as a debt (Rom. 4:4) versus Reward as a gift (Eph. 2:8)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lessons Learned:</th>
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   -- First, from the standpoint of feeling “smug” that we have done sufficiently “enough,” and
   -- Second, from the feeling of discouragement and despondency because we have done insufficiently “enough.”
Will you have confidence (Faith) in God & His arrangements to save (the gospel)?

Believe on Christ + Repent + Be Baptized

You will have then been saved by...
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If so, your faith in His arrangements will lead you to submit to His conditions of the gospel:
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**Eph. 2:8-10**