

# Justification by Faith

<b>Key Text:</b>	Romans 3:21 - Romans 5
<b>Key Verse(s):</b>	“Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.” (Romans 5:18)

## Background to the Study

Paul, having established humanity’s sinfulness and inability to achieve righteousness through its own efforts, introduces God’s solution: justification by faith in Christ. Romans 3:21-26 include several important truths upon which the Gospel rests. These include Paul’s view of the purpose of the law, which was to drive home to men’s consciences the conviction of sin, and to point forward (along with the prophets) to a more perfect revelation of God’s righteousness. Paul summarizes the purpose of the Law and introduces grace, a concept not previously addressed in the epistle. In verses 27-31, he draws conclusions about righteousness based on his prior discussion. Chapter 4 defends justification by faith apart from the Law, using Abraham as an example.

In Romans 3:21-23, Paul highlights the universal need for God’s remedy in Christ, using athletic metaphors to describe how all fall short of God’s glory. Verses 24-25 define key Gospel terms: "justified" (judicial pardon by God’s grace), "redemption" (liberation through Christ’s sacrifice), and "propitiation" (Christ’s atoning death that satisfies God’s wrath). In verses 27-31, Paul concludes that righteousness by faith negates boasting, is available to all, and fulfils the Law rather than nullifying it.

Knowing that those steeped in Judaism would point to Abraham as a rebuttal of his teaching of justification through faith apart from the works of the Law, in chapter 4 Paul presented an analysis of how Abraham was made righteous. He responds to Jewish objections by showing that Abraham’s righteousness came by faith, not works or circumcision (verses 1-12). In verse 3, Paul quotes Genesis 15:6, affirming that Abraham’s faith, not his deeds, was credited to him as righteousness. Verses 7-8, quoting Psalm 32, express the joy of those justified by faith.

In the first part of chapter 5, Paul outlines the benefits of justification by faith (vs. 1-11), which include peace with God, access to grace, and hope of sharing in God’s glory. This peace is not mere tranquillity but reconciliation with God. Paul also emphasizes that enduring trials produces hope (vs. 3-5). Since first-century Christians lived in an atmosphere where persecution and suffering was prevalent, they needed to understand the benefit of enduring. The word “commendeth” in verse 8 implies that God demonstrated His love by sending Christ not because humanity deserved it, but because He loved them.

From verse 12 onward, Paul compares Adam and Christ. As Adam's sin brought death to all, Christ's sacrifice brought justification and life. The word "sin" in verse 12 refers to a governing principle of rebellion against God, rather than individual transgressions. The word "figure" in verse 14 (Greek *typos*) indicates that Adam, as the representative of mankind, introduced sin into the human race, while individual guilt arises from personal sin.

## Testimony from Our Day

A few years ago, I met Tillie Nelson, affectionately known as "Aunt Tillie" in our church. She was a petite woman, but her grammatical expertise and quick wit were legendary. Kind and gracious, she shared her knowledge freely, and her life reflected a deep personal relationship with Christ.

However, Aunt Tillie's journey to this point wasn't always clear. While she came from a good family and attended church from childhood, she lived for years with only a profession of faith. A well-educated woman, she taught Sunday school, supported youth organizations, and even served six years as a missionary in India. After returning home, she continued her service in the church, but despite her active religious life, she felt dissatisfied and conflicted. Deep down, she knew there were things she shouldn't be doing, but couldn't give them up.

When she became private secretary to her brother, a U.S. Congressman, two of his sons were dramatically converted during a service at an Apostolic Faith church. Her brother encouraged her to visit the annual camp meeting in Portland, Oregon. There, Aunt Tillie began searching her heart and comparing her life to the Word of God. "I made an astonishing discovery," she later said. "I had only a profession of Christianity." Though she had been a missionary and active in Christian work, she realized she was not truly saved. That night, she knelt at the altar, confessed her sin, and reached out to God in faith. He graciously saved her soul, and she finally experienced the salvation she had longed for.

Aunt Tillie's story echoes the Apostle Paul's message: justification is not through works or the "deeds of the law," but through faith in Jesus Christ. Our redemption was purchased at the cost of Christ's blood. If salvation could be earned through good deeds, Aunt Tillie's efforts would have qualified her, but only faith in Jesus brought her the peace and assurance she sought. For the rest of her life, she appreciated redemption through His blood.

Do you have assurance in your heart that you've been justified and forgiven? Come to God in repentance and faith, just as Aunt Tillie did. It's the only way.

# A Closer Look

Question 1	Romans 3:23 states that all mankind has sinned. The following two verses contain three words which are key in Paul's explanation of the provision God has made to remedy this sinful condition: "justified," "redemption," and "propitiation." The word "justified" has the sense of being judicially pardoned. "Redemption" implies liberation from captivity through a ransom price paid. "Propitiation" expresses the concept of appeasement or conciliation. Using these definitions, briefly note how each word figures in God's plan of redemption.
Question 2	Paul knew that adherents to the Law would point to righteous Abraham as a rebuttal of the teaching of justification through faith, so in chapter 4, Paul presented an analysis of how Abraham was made righteous. The Apostle pointed out that it was not by works (verses 1-8), nor by fulfilling the requirements of the Law (verses 9-12). Based on verses 13-16, what was the basis of Abraham's righteousness? Why is this significant for us? Why is it futile to put confidence in the rituals or observances of religion as the basis for salvation?
Question 3	What are some ways our attempts to do good prior to being justified differ from the righteous life we live after being justified?
Question 4	First-century Christians lived in an atmosphere where persecution and suffering were prevalent, and in order to endure, they needed to have a deep understanding of the benefits that were theirs through justification. What were some of the effects and blessings of justification by faith that Paul listed in Romans 5:1-11?
Question 5	The word commendeth in Romans 5:8 is significant. In this usage it includes the sense of "recommending" or setting forth in such a way as to appeal to the heart. Name several specific ways that God's love has commended itself to you.
Question 6	What do the words "when we were enemies" (Romans 5:10) indicate? Jesus died for us; what are our responsibilities to receive justification through Him?

## Take Home

Good works will never give us a right standing before God. We can only be justified through faith in Jesus Christ and His Blood that was shed for our redemption. He died for us while we were sinners, and by His sacrificial death made the free gift of justification by faith available to all.