

Justification Is by Faith Without Works (2:15 to 3:24)

by C.I. Scofield

Justification is by faith without works, and the law cannot justify or help to justify, but rather brings home the knowledge of guilt and teaches man the deep inherent evil of his nature.

Scripture: Romans 3:22, Romans 6:6, Romans 7:7, Galatians 2:19-20, Galatians 3:6, Galatians 3:13, Galatians 3:24, Galatians 4:1

Topics: "Justification By Faith", "Redemption Through Christ"

Description

C.I. Scofield preaches about the liberation from the law through faith in Christ, emphasizing the believer's death to the law and new life in Christ. He explains that true Gospel liberty and holiness can only be experienced when one fully grasps the fundamental truth of being dead to the law through Christ's crucifixion. Scofield delves into the concepts of justification by faith, righteousness by faith, and the reception of the Holy Spirit through faith, highlighting the importance of understanding redemption through Christ's sacrifice and the inadequacy of seeking righteousness through the law.

Transcript

The course of this demonstration is like the resistless march of an armed host. Nothing can stand before it. The flimsy quibblings of ancient and modern legalists are scattered like the chaff of the summer threshing floor. But this march is, like that of a well-ordered army, by definite stages. It is an invasion in which every vantage point is fortified and made a solid base for the next advance.

Friends, let us give our hearts to these things. We have, most of us, been reared and now live under the influence of Galatianism. Protestant theology, alas, is for the most part, thoroughly Galatianized, in that neither law nor grace are given their distinct and separated places, as in the counsels of God, but are mingled together in one incoherent system. The law is no longer, as in the divine intent, a ministration of death (2 Cor. 3:7), of cursing (Gal. 3:10), or conviction (Rom. 3:19), because we are taught that we must try to keep it, and that by Divine help we may. Nor, on the other hand, does grace bring us into freedom, for we are kept under the law (see Rom. 6:14).

The Apostle, then, first informs the Galatians that even the Jews, the men of privilege--who are not Gentiles "without Christ ... aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12), but "who are Israelites; to whom

pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came" (Rom. 9:4, 5)--even the Jews have believed in Jesus Christ that they might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law (2:15, 16).

But death has freed the believer from the law (v. 19). Here is a great principle upon which I must ask you to pause for a moment. It is not only that the believer is as to the law, a dead man, but the far deeper thing is true that it was the law which killed him. He is dead to the law, not through suicide, but through execution. The law which he violated has condemned and executed him. The law, finding him red-handed, did not exhort him to try again, but summarily slew him. How this was is made clear in verse 20: "I am crucified with Christ." However unreal that may seem to the saint as a matter of experience, it is to God, who gave the law, an eternal fact; and the important matter is not what the believer "feels," but what God says. Doubtless the believer is called upon (Rom. 6:11) to "reckon" that to be true which God avers to be true; but the believer's reckoning has to do with his experience, not with his justification--and, whether or not he so reckons himself, the fact remains immutable that to God he is, as to the law, an executed criminal. Justice has been completely vindicated, and it is no longer possible even to bring an accusation against him (Rom. 8:33, 34).

It is not possible to know Gospel liberty nor Gospel holiness until this great fundamental truth is clearly, bravely grasped. One may be a Christian, and a worthy and useful man, and be still under bondage to the law; but one can never have deliverance from the dominion of sin, nor know the true blessedness and rest of the Gospel and remain under the law. Therefore, once more, note that it is death which has broken the connection between the believer and the law: "The law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth" (Rom. 7:1). "But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held" (Rom. 7:6). Nothing can be clearer.

But I hasten to add that there is a mere carnal and fleshly way of looking at our deliverance from the law, which is most unscriptural, and, I am persuaded, most dishonoring to God. It consists in rejoining in a supposed deliverance from the principle of divine authority over the life--a deliverance into mere self-will and lawlessness.

The true ground of rejoining is quite other than this. The believer is set free from that which condemned him, and which, though perfectly "holy, just and good" in itself, only incited the flesh to acts of rebellion (Rom. 7:7-13). No, the believer's co-crucifixion with Christ was to the end that "henceforth he should not serve sin" (Rom. 6:6).

Accordingly, the Apostle moves to the second statement, in which, indeed, he slightly anticipates the truth concerning the principle of the believer's life, to which truth he devotes the fifth section of the Epistle. That truth is two-fold: (1) Though crucified with Christ he is alive again because Christ now lives in him; and (2) the principle by which his new life is governed is the by-faith, instead of the by-law principle (2:20). This, as has just been said, is not strictly germane to the question of justification, but the Apostle states it, apparently, to meet instantly a charge of antinomianism--a calumny which legalists perpetually fling at those who, in realized deliverance from law, are seeking holiness through faith.

Remember the steps: The believer is justified by faith; is dead to the law; is alive again because Christ lives in him; and the principle of his present life is the by-faith principle. This opens an immense door of hope concerning daily deliverance from the power of sin. because "all things are possible to him that

believeth."

Justification, it may be remarked in passing, is that act of God whereby He declares righteous all who believe in Jesus. It is something which takes place in the mind of God, not in the nervous system or emotional nature of the believer.

The third proposition (v. 21) opens the whole question of righteousness. Here is another great word. It is used in Scripture in three senses--one bad, two good. The bad sense is self, or legal righteousness. The pharisee who thanked God that he was not as other men; the Apostle Paul, in Philippians 3:4-6, had that kind of righteousness. Fortunately, not only for himself but for us, Paul's legal righteousness came to a test in the white light of the shekinah before it was too late. On the Damascus road Paul saw its true nature. What is, in the Divine estimation, the very highest possible quality ("if any man thinketh he hath whereof he might glory in the flesh, I more") of legal righteousness? Paul tells us--"dung."

The good senses of righteousness are (1) the righteousness of God imputed to him who believes on Christ, in justification (Rom. 3:22; 4:5-8), and imparted in regeneration (Gal. 2:20; 1 John 4:15); and, (2) that character which is the "fruit of righteousness" (Rom. 6:17, 18; 8:4). And this righteousness is simply "Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us ... righteousness" (1 Cor. 1:30).

Come back now from this necessary excursus to Galatians 2:21, the Apostle's third proposition--righteousness, whether imputed or imparted, whether of standing or state, is by faith and not by law. If it is not so, then Christ is dead in vain. Are any of our under-the-law brethren ready for that alternative?

In chapter 3, verse 2, the fourth step forward is taken. The Holy Spirit is received by faith, not by the works of the law. Observe, friends, the tremendous accumulative force of these successive positions. Each principle, by itself, is enough. If even the Jew must be justified by faith apart from works, that is an end of the matter surely for a poor Gentile. If the law has condemned and executed the sinner who believes, then surely he is not justified by what killed him. If righteousness is by faith and not by law, surely it is folly to seek it by law. So each of these principles spells deliverance. But now there is a fourth principle: The Galatians received the Holy Spirit by simply believing. If, then, God has already sealed them (Eph. 1:13), to what purpose add law-works? (Acts 10:44-48; 11:17, 18; 15:7-11).

Even this does not, however, exhaust the Spirit's reasons why justification is by faith and not by law-works. He takes another position, the fifth. Salvation, as we all agree, is under the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 12:1-4; 15:1-7). Is that a by-faith, or by-law covenant? The question answers itself: Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness (Gal. 3:6-9).

The law was not given till four hundred and thirty years after the call of Abraham--so not only did Abraham not have the law, but he was not even circumcised (Rom. 4:10),

And now, sixth, the Apostle faces the law question directly (3:10-13):

(1) The law cannot justify nor help to justify, for it curses all (3:10).

(2) But that curse has been borne by Christ on the tree; and Christ's cross work effected redemption. Here is the third great word of Galatians. Justification and righteousness we have looked at--what is redemption?

The fundamental idea of redemption is to acquire by purchase. The price we know--the awful cost of Calvary. But we shall understand redemption better if we call to mind that three words are translated "redemption": agorazo, to buy in the market; exagorazo, to buy out of the market; and, lootroo, to set loose, or free. How wonderful!

Think of our condition; slaves in the market, under the sentence of death. Will anyone buy?

"Perhaps; what is the price of that slave?"

"Oh, one price on each; whoever buys must take the slave's place and die."

"Will anyone buy at that price? Will the law redeem? Here is Caiaphas, the high priest. Ho! Caiaphas, will you die for this sheep?"

"Certainly not," answers Caiaphas; "sheep must die for me."

"Will no one buy at this awful cost?"

Yes, the Holy Son of God will pay even that price. He, friends, bought us in the market, bought us out of the market, set us free. That is redemption.

(3) The law curses, but there are two things the law does not do: it neither adds a new condition to the Abrahamic covenant, nor does it disannul the old condition of simple faith (3:15-17).

(4) The Apostle answers the inevitable question: Why then the law? (3:19-23). If it does not alter nor in any way affect the Abrahamic covenant, why was it given? His answer is: It was added because of transgressions--and this in three senses:

(a) Sin becomes transgression only when there is a law about it (Rom. 5:13). To transgress is to "step over," and there must be something to step over before there can be transgression. Sin of course existed, and was inherently evil, before the law, but it had not the character of transgression, nor was it imputed or "put to the account" of the sinner (Rom. 5:13).

(b) The law brought home to the sinner the knowledge of his guilt (Rom. 7:7; 3:20). Coveting, for example, is so "natural" that no one would know it was sinful if the law had not said, "Thou shalt not covet."

(c) The law taught man the deep inherent evil of his nature. What but evil could that nature be which is provoked to sin by a holy, just, and good law? (Rom. 7:8, 9).

That such is the effect of law our own consciousness, our own observation, affirms. Forbid a child to do something which it never thought of doing, and straightway it will long to do it.

You have heard, doubtless, of the Florentine in the middle ages who boasted that he had never been outside of Florence. He was born in Florence, and would live and die in Florence. Hearing this, the reigning duke sent him an imperative order never to go outside the walls of Florence. From that day the man spent his life in longing to go. He would go down to the gates and weep because he must stay within.

The law, friends, is a most necessary ministration to self-deceitful, self-righteous man. It is "holy, just, and good" (Rom. 7:12), and the more spiritual we become, the more we see with awe, and also with delight in so perfect an expression of the holiness of our God, the great "ten words" from Sinai. But we do not seek

to be saved by it. As Mr. Moody used to say: "The law is a good looking-glass in which to show a child how defiled its face is, but who would think of washing the child's face with the looking-glass?"

Furthermore, the Apostle points out that the law was our pedagogue "unto Christ" (3:24). In the authorized rendering of verse 24 the term "schoolmaster" is misleading. It is a most inadequate rendering of the Greek paidagogus, from which we have our English word pedagogue. But with us, too, pedagogue means "teacher." The pedagogue in a Greek household was the servant who had charge of the minor children. Over their behaviour, their mental and moral training, he was supreme, having even the authority to administer chastisement. That, then, was one aspect of the law. As the Apostle goes on to say, the Jews under the law, though heirs, differed nothing from servants. As minor children were under the pedagogue, so the Jewish people were under the law: "Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world" (Gal. 4:1-3).

And this, as we shall see in the next address, prepares the way for the Galatians to understand by contrast how their position in grace differs fundamentally from that of the Jew under the law.

At present we close with the emphatic declaration: "But after that faith is come, we are no longer under the pedagogue" (v. 25). Whatever may be our thoughts or our fears, however it may seem to land us in a kind of spiritual anarchy, let us never be afraid to set to our seal that God is true. What we are under will appear later, if God will; but for better or worse we are no longer under the pedagogue. We may be sure it is for better and not for worse.

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