PART 2 / Experiencing the Power of the Gospel

Lesson 6 - Justification by Faith



In Part 1 of this course, we discovered three important facts: (1) our universal sin problem; (2) God's unconditional love for mankind; and (3) the incredible good news of salvation in Christ, the gospel. On the cross, God obtained for the entire human race a salvation that is full and complete. However, the big question is, How can this wonderful salvation be mine? In other words, "What must I do to be saved?" This and the next few studies will answer that question.

Because God created mankind with a free will, He does not force His gift of salvation in Christ on anyone. While it is true that "God so loved the world (human race), that He gave His only begotten Son," the offer is "that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). The good news of the gospel demands a human response if the salvation Christ accomplished for all mankind is to be made effective in us as individuals.

According to the Bible, that human response is described by the word faith. When the good news of salvation is received by our individual faith response, the gospel is made effective and the believer will experience the wonderful truth of justification by faith. In this lesson, we will consider this important truth.

1. After His resurrection, what commission did Jesus give His disciples? Mark 16:15

2. What did Christ say would be the result of our human response? Mark 16:16

The only reason anyone is lost is because of a deliberate and persistent rejection of the gospel. God does not blame us for being sinners, since we are born sinful, but He does hold us responsible if we deliberately and ultimately reject His gift of salvation in Christ (see John 3:18, 36).

3. What change takes place in those who believe in God's gift of salvation? John 5:24

4. According to the apostle Paul, how is justification experienced? Romans 3:28

Justification means God declares you righteous. In the Bible, justification by faith is God's way of saving sinners in contrast to salvation by works of the law or good works, which is man's way of saving himself.

5. Will anyone be saved or justified by the works of the law? Galatians 2:16

6. What part does the law play in the experience of justification by faith? Galatians 3:24

The Greek word Paul used for "tutor" (NKJV), "schoolmaster" (KJV), or "put in charge" (NIV), etc., was pedagogos. This was an entrusted slave who was responsible to take his master's children to their private tutor. So also, Paul says, while the law itself does not save us, one of its main functions is to bring us sinners to Christ so that we may be justified by faith.

7. What two terms may a judge use when stating the verdict in a courtroom? Deuteronomy 25:1

The word "justify" or "justification" is a legal term and is applied only to those who are found righteous or not guilty. It is the very opposite of "condemnation," which is the verdict for sinners or those who are found guilty.

8. On what basis does God justify the ungodly (wicked)? Romans 4:5

Since "all have sinned and come short of God's glory" (Romans 3:23), our only hope of being declared righteous before God is through justification by faith.

9. How does one experience faith that justifies a sinner? Romans 10:17

Knowledge of the gospel is the first prerequisite to saving faith. Jesus said: “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). By “truth” Jesus was referring to Himself (John 8:36, 17:3).

10. What does it mean to have faith in Christ? John 6:40

A mere knowledge of the gospel is not enough. One has to believe in Jesus. The Jewish nation of Paul's day heard the gospel but not all believed (see Romans 10:16, 18). Jesus made it clear that only those who believe in Him will be saved (see John 3:18, 5:24, and 11:25).

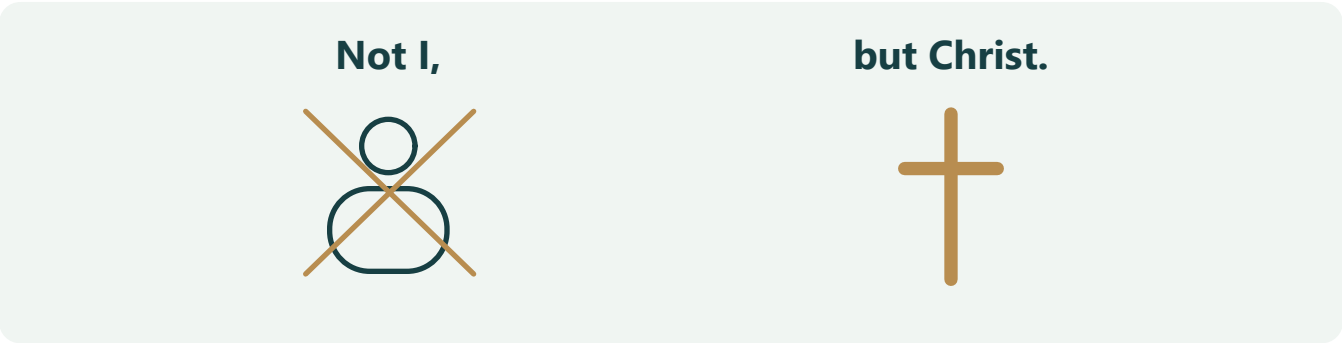
11. What is involved in believing in Christ? Romans 6:17

To believe is more than a mental assent to the truth as it is in Christ. It involves a heart-obedience to the facts of the gospel. Faith is saying “Yes” to God. It is the surrender of the will to our new history God obtained for mankind in Christ (see Galatians 5:7; Hebrews 5:9; 1 Peter 4:17). This is New Testament faith.

12. What does it mean to obey the gospel? Colossians 3:3

The gospel is what God did to mankind in Christ (Lesson 3). By joining our humanity that needed redeeming to Christ in the incarnation, God qualified Christ to be our substitute. This made it possible for Christ to rewrite our history. By His perfect life and sacrificial death we stand complete in Him (Colossians 2:10).

To know, believe, and obey the gospel therefore means we acknowledge this truth from the heart and accept Christ's life as our life and His death as our death. We are in effect uniting with Christ, by faith, just as He united with us, so that we become one. Such faith-obedience means we confess with Paul: “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). This is what it means to abide in Christ (John 15:4-8).



13. According to the Old Testament how is one to be justified? Habakkuk 2:4

14. How did the Gentiles obtain the righteousness that saves? Romans 9:30

15. Why did Israel fail to attain to this righteousness? Romans 9:31, 32

16. What did Paul have to give up to experience righteousness by faith? Philippians 3:7-9

It is impossible to be saved by faith in Christ and still hold on to our own self-righteousness. Justification that saves is by faith alone and nothing else. However, while we are not saved by faith plus works, we are saved unto good works (see Ephesians 2:8-10).

17. What happens when one adds law-keeping to justification by faith? Galatians 5:4

Any believer who adds his or her good works as a contribution to salvation will forfeit Christ's righteousness altogether. As sinners we cannot accept Christ's perfect righteousness by faith and then try to add our own good works to it. The gospel will not allow salvation partly of Christ and partly of us. It is either all of Christ's righteousness or none of it.

18. Does justification by faith alone mean we can now live as we please? Galatians 5:13

19. Why does the grace of God not allow believers to condone sinning? Romans 6:1, 2

As Christians, we must consider ourselves dead to sin and alive unto God in Christ (see Romans 6:10, 11). Justification by faith is saying Not I, but Christ.

20. What other reason does a Christian have for not condoning sin? Romans 6:15-18

Sin and righteousness belong to opposite camps. When we obey the gospel, we are not only saying good-bye to death, the wages of sin, but also to sin itself. In exchange, we have chosen to live a life of righteousness.

21. What happens when a Christian falls and commits a sin? 1 John 2:1

While believers do not condone sin they still possess sinful natures and in a weak moment may fall. This, however, does not deprive them of justification. We do have an advocate at the right hand of God to intercede for us against the accusations of Satan. Christ is not only our Savior but also our great High Priest.

22. What is the immediate blessing to those who are justified by faith? Romans 5:1

As long as we are believers in Christ and stand justified by faith, we have and will continue to have peace with God. We may not have peace in this world but our hearts rejoice because we have been reconciled to God and have the peace which surpasses all under-standing (see John 14:27, Philippians 4:7).

23. What ultimate hope does access to God’s grace give us? Romans 5:2

Access to God's grace here means the power or strength of God which makes it possible for believers to live the Christian life and fulfill God's purpose for them (see 1 Corinthians 15:9, 10 and 2 Corinthians 12:7-9). With such grace, we are able to reflect the unconditional agape love of God. It is this love that demonstrates to the world that the gospel is indeed the power of God to salvation (see John 13:34, 35).

My Response to Lesson 6

• Recognizing that you are a sinner, incapable of saving yourself, do you accept by faith the justification (righteousness) that Christ obtained for you in His holy history?

Response: _____

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