

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Fourth Quarter 2017: *Salvation by Faith Alone: The Book of Romans*

Lesson 4 “Justification by Faith”

Read for this week’s study

Romans 3:19–28.

Memory Text

“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (Romans 3:28).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Deeds of the Law
- III. The Righteousness of God
- IV. By His Grace
- V. The Righteousness of Christ
- VI. Without the Deeds of the Law
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. The key word of the memory text (Romans 3:28) is “faith.” How would you understand this critical word? (Sabbath afternoon)
2. Read Romans 3:19-20. What is Paul saying here about the law, about what it can and cannot do? Can you recall a time when you were trying to be saved by keeping the law, perhaps even perfectly? What was that like and what were the results in your life? (Sunday’s lesson)
3. Read Romans 3:21-28. What is Paul’s main point in this passage? Now read Romans 3:21-22. How do these verses relate to Romans 3:10-20? In what way do they also echo 1:16-17? What four phrases in 3:21-22 qualify the meaning of “the righteousness of God has been revealed”? What do each of these phrases mean? What is “the faith of Jesus Christ”? Why does Paul say “there is no difference”? (Monday’s and Tuesday’s lessons)
4. Read Romans 3:23-24. How does this explain the phrase “there is no difference” in verse 22? What does verse 23 tell us about the human condition? How does the opening phrase of verse 24 relate to verse 23? Does justification cover past, present

and future or only the past? How would one know from this text? As good as this news is, what holds people back from accepting it? (Monday's and Tuesday's lessons)

5. Read Romans 3:24-28. On what grounds are people justified freely, according to this passage? What is the meaning of the Greek word *hilasterion* (various translations include mercy seat, propitiation, expiation) in verse 25? What is the meaning of "the faith in his blood" in verse 25? Read Romans 3:25-27 again. In what ways does God demonstrate His righteousness? Why is there no room for boasting in this method of salvation? Is there room for a "larger view" here? (Wednesday's lesson)
6. Read Romans 3:28 again. Does this verse mean that justification does not require us to obey the law anymore? What does Paul mean by "law" in this text? (Thursday's lesson)
7. According to the *Handbook of SDA Theology* (SDABC, vol. 12) "Seventh-day Adventists see themselves as heirs of and builders upon the Reformation insights into biblical teaching on justification by grace through faith alone, and restorers and exponents of the fullness, clarity, and balance of the apostolic gospel." Do you agree with this statement? What reasons would many Adventists cite for believing this about themselves? (Friday's lesson)

A Fresh Translation of Romans 3:21-28, Jon Paulien

Key

Italics = Not in Greek text, but required by the context

Bold = Quotation from the Old Testament

[] = Explanatory note by translator

21 But now,
 apart from law,
 a righteousness from God has been revealed,
 being witnessed to by the law and the prophets,
22 a righteousness from God *has been revealed*
 through the faith of Jesus Christ,
 to all who believe:
 for there is no difference:
23 For all have sinned [aorist indicative—point in past time]
and continually fall short [present continuous]
 of the glory of God,
24 being justified freely by His grace
 through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus
25 whom God set forth *as* a mercy seat [propitiation, expiation, sacrifice of
 atonement]
 through the faith in His blood

in order that He might demonstrate His righteousness
on account of the passing over the sins that happened beforehand
26 in the forbearance of God,
in order to demonstrate His righteousness
in the “now” time,
in order that He might be just and the justifier
of the one who is of the faith of Jesus.
27 Where, then, is boasting?
It is excluded.
Through what kind of law?
One of works?
No.
To the contrary, through the law of faith.
28 For we reckon a man is justified by faith
apart from works of law.

Translations of Romans 3:25a

ESV—“whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.”

KJV—“Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood,”

NASB—“whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith.”

NIV—“God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood.”

NRSV—“whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith.”

RSV—“whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith.”

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Recommended Listening: The entire series by Graham Maxwell on the book of Romans is available at <http://pkp.cc/MMROMANS66>

Lou: You have said a great deal about trust this evening. I can hear a person saying something like this, “When are we going to get on to the really important ideas of justification and sanctification, expiation, propitiation, atonement, substitution and so forth. Haven’t we spent long enough on trust?”

Graham: I think we have been talking about justification, but we've given it another name. We'll even use those names, because they are an important part of our history. And when we talk to our friends for whom those *are* the words, then we should use them if we are going to communicate at all. But I'd rather use the words the Bible uses. And some would say, "Well, aren't those the words the Bible uses?" No. It's going to be interesting to arrive in the Kingdom and settle all debates by going up to Paul and saying, "Give us the last word, Paul. What did you mean by justification?"

"Could I hear that one more time?" he'll say.

"Yes. Justification. You know, your favorite word."

"Well, I never used it."

"How about sanctification?"

"No."

"Propitiation? You mean you used none of those terms? Expiation?"

Paul never used one of them. Neither did Jesus or anybody else in the Bible. You see, they are largely Latin words that came from a period when Latin was largely used for theology. A good many of the words, a good share of the heavier words, have Latin derivation. Some come from Greek. We'll look at *Sola Scriptura*. That's pure Latin. Why do we keep using it? Why not "the Bible only." Or the *Christomonistic principle*. That's Greek. *Christos* (Christ) and *monos* (only). Why not say the "Christ alone" principle? I would rather use simple terms as we go through; but having discussed the whole plan of salvation and its transforming experience, we'll sprinkle these terms through if you like, so you can see where they fit. But Jesus described the whole truth about his Father and how we could be saved without ever using one of those words. Jesus spoke Aramaic. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #3 with Lou Venden, "All God Asks is Trust" recorded January, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:*

<http://pkp.cc/3MMCAG>

Romans 3:25 and 26 goes on to say that if we have been won back by all that God has done at such infinite cost; we've been won back to trust him and to trust his Son, he justifies us. What does it mean to be justified? Paul, of course, has never heard the term. It's more Latin than English. Justify literally in the Latin means to make just, as solidify means to make solid, petrify means to make like a stone, justify, to make righteous. But the word has come to have some very special meanings. The Greek is *dekiao*. *Dekiao* is the verb, *dekiasone* is the noun. Now that's translated righteousness. In the gospel, the *dekiasone* of God is revealed, the righteousness of God. The adjective for righteous is *dekias*. *Dekias* is righteous, *dekiasone* is

righteousness. Put an “a” in front to make *adekias*, and that’s unrighteous. We consistently translate this root with the word righteous in there somewhere—righteousness, righteous, unrighteous. But when we come to the verb *dekiao*, we don’t say *make righteous* but we say *justify*. How did that ever get started? Justification has accumulated all kinds of special meanings. However, there isn’t agreement everywhere as to what the meaning is. One of the most instructive and vigorous arguments about this took place when no less a scholar than Bruce Metzger at Princeton took up the argument with Goodspeed, the Greek scholar who wrote many books and translated the New Testament in 1923. Goodspeed was a great scholar who always sought for clarity and simplicity. That doesn’t mean he is right here. But, it means that he argued for his translation “to make upright” with great force. But he provoked many people. He translates Romans 3:25-26: “God makes upright those who have faith in his son.”

If you look in the versions, you find a great variety of translations. There is: set right, declare right, make right, put right, account right, accounted right. What do you have in front of you for Romans 3:25 and 26? “Accounted right” is quite common.

Well, what does it mean to us is all that matters. If only we had an English word, “rightify”, we wouldn’t have to use the Latin justify. That would be the best, because then you would have righteousness, righteous, unrighteous, rightify.

The word has accumulated so many meanings over the years that we really need to take a fresh look at it. In fact, it used to distress Ellen White to hear people argue at such length about the distinctions between justification and sanctification, leading her to write this in 1891, three years after the Minneapolis General Conference:

Many commit the error of trying to define minutely the fine points of distinction between justification and sanctification. Into the definition of these two terms, they often bring their own ideas and speculations. Why try to be more minute than is inspiration on the vital question of righteousness by faith?

Now, how’s that for counsel and warning as we ask what it means to be justified? It means one could go too far in drawing distinctions that are not merited by scripture. That quotation is in that 7A Volume of the *Bible Commentary*, page 296. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Romans, chapter 4, recorded October, 1977, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/7MMROMANS66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/8MMROMANS66> (Part 2)

If it is true that God values nothing higher than our freedom, why has he made so much use of law? If all he asks is trust and love, and these cannot be commanded or produced by force, then why did he give us the Decalogue, which seems to demand our love and obedience under

threat of execution? If he doesn't wish to be seen as arbitrary, exacting, and severe, why has he surrounded us with innumerable rules?

Paul understood all about trust and freedom. He emphasized it so much that he was accused of doing away with these rules, doing away with God's law. "No," he said, "I intend no such thing. Faith does not abolish law. Faith establishes the law, by putting it in its proper perspective." But what is the right perspective from which to view God's use of law? It is mentioned in Galatians 3, the first text on the Bible Reference Sheet. Paul raises the question his audience was asking: "Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions." (RSV)

Then Paul goes on to explain why the law was added. Using the *King James* language, he said, "The law was our school master to bring us to Christ." The Greek word is *paidagogos*. Can you hear pedagogue in that, the pedagogical method? But that word actually was the name given to a trusted slave whose duty it was to take the children to school, to make sure they got there, stayed there, and then it was his duty to bring them home. He was not the teacher. He was the guardian; he was the protector. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #11, "God's Emergency Measures" recorded April, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/11MMCAG>

Now there is a difficult word in there, "propitiation." Propitiation means appeasement, and is a most regrettable translation. Propitiation is what you husbands may offer your wives when you promised to be home on your anniversary at 6 p.m. to take your wife out to dinner, and now it's 11 p.m., and you've just remembered. So on the way home you find an all-night florist shop and you buy some chocolates and whatever else you can lay your hands on. As you approach the front door with some trepidation, you open it and hand the flowers and the chocolates in. You are trying to propitiate the righteous wrath of your deeply disappointed wife. That's propitiation; that's appeasement.

I wish there were time to really analyze that verse. The word translated "propitiation", is "*hilasterion*." Do you know that that is the Greek word used for the mercy seat? Although the Bible does not mention mercy seat in the Old Testament; Luther made it up. When Luther looked at this word which is used for the cover of the ark, the Ark of the Covenant, he found that the Hebrew word just means a "covering." But that covering was so important that he translated it "Mercy Seat" or in the old German, "Gnadstuhl." (Now written "Gnadenstuhl.")

Tyndale was a friend of Luther, who first did this in 1524, and in 1525 Tyndale brought it over into English and several versions followed him. That's where mercy seat came from. The cover of the Ark was never called mercy seat until the early sixteenth century A.D. But think of the meaning of what happened before the mercy seat; it was not a bad choice. It's just a pity that

our *King James Version* uses mercy seat in Exodus and mercy seat in Hebrews 9:5, but does not use mercy seat in Romans 3:25, 26. It uses propitiation. I think mercy seat would have been much closer. For this Greek word means literally “a place or means of reconciliation;” a place where atonement or unity and at-one-ment take place. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #8, “The Most Costly and Convincing Evidence” recorded March, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/8MMCAG>*

Further Study with Ellen White

If man had kept the law of God, as given to Adam after his fall, preserved by Noah, and observed by Abraham, there would have been no necessity for the ordinance of circumcision. And if the descendants of Abraham had kept the covenant, of which circumcision was a sign, they would never have been seduced into idolatry, nor would it have been necessary for them to suffer a life of bondage in Egypt; they would have kept God’s law in mind, and there would have been no necessity for it to be proclaimed from Sinai or engraved upon the tables of stone. And had the people practiced the principles of the Ten Commandments, there would have been no need of the additional directions given to Moses. {PP 364.2}

Our will is not to be forced into co-operation with divine agencies, but it must be voluntarily submitted. Were it possible to force upon you with a hundredfold greater intensity the influence of the Spirit of God, it would not make you a Christian, a fit subject for heaven. The stronghold of Satan would not be broken. {MB 142.1}

The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God from a sense of obligation merely—because he is required to do so—will never enter into the joy of obedience. He does not obey. When the requirements of God are accounted a burden because they cut across human inclination, we may know that the life is not a Christian life. True obedience is the outworking of a principle within. It springs from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God. The essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer. This will lead us to do right because it is right—because right doing is pleasing to God. {COL 97.3}

Satan is ever at work endeavoring to pervert what God has spoken, to blind the mind and darken the understanding, and thus lead men into sin. This is why the Lord is so explicit, making His requirements so very plain that none need err. God is constantly seeking to draw men close under His protection, that Satan may not practice his cruel, deceptive power upon them. He has condescended to speak to them with His own voice, to write with His own hand the living oracles. And these blessed words, all instinct with life and luminous with truth, are committed to men as a perfect guide. {PP 503.3}

The law of ten commandments is not to be looked upon as much from the prohibitory side, as from the mercy side. Its prohibitions are the sure guarantee of happiness in obedience. As received in Christ, it works in us the purity of character that will bring joy to us through eternal ages. To the obedient it is a wall of protection. We behold in it the goodness of God, who by revealing to men the immutable principles of righteousness, seeks to shield them from the evils that result from transgression. {1SM 235.1}

We are not to regard God as waiting to punish the sinner for his sin. The sinner brings the punishment upon himself. His own actions start a train of circumstances that bring the sure result. Every act of transgression reacts upon the sinner, works in him a change of character, and makes it more easy for him to transgress again. By choosing to sin, men separate themselves from God, cut themselves off from the channel of blessing, and the sure result is ruin and death. {1SM 235.2}

“The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” In this scripture, the Holy Spirit through the apostle is speaking especially of the moral law. The law reveals sin to us, and causes us to feel our need of Christ, and to flee unto Him for pardon and peace by exercising repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . {6BC 1110.3}

As we discern the perfection of our Saviour’s character we shall desire to become wholly transformed and renewed in the image of His purity. The more we know of God, the higher will be our ideal of character and the more earnest our longing to reflect His likeness. A divine element combines with the human when the soul reaches out after God and the longing heart can say, “My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him.” Psalm 62:5. {MB 19.3}

The leaven hidden in the flour works invisibly to bring the whole mass under its leavening process; so the leaven of truth works secretly, silently, steadily, to transform the soul. The natural inclinations are softened and subdued. New thoughts, new feelings, new motives, are implanted. A new standard of character is set up—the life of Christ. The mind is changed; the faculties are roused to action in new lines. Man is not endowed with new faculties, but the faculties he has are sanctified. The conscience is awakened. We are endowed with traits of character that enable us to do service for God. {COL 98.3}

By beholding Jesus we receive a living, expanding principle in the heart, and the Holy Spirit carries on the work, and the believer advances from grace to grace, from strength to strength, from character to character. He conforms to the image of Christ, until in spiritual growth he attains unto the measure of the full stature in Christ Jesus. Thus Christ makes an end of the curse of sin, and sets the believing soul free from its action and effect. {1SM 395.1}

The same divine mind that is working upon the things of nature is speaking to the hearts of men and creating an inexpressible craving for something they have not. The things of the world cannot satisfy their longing. The Spirit of God is pleading with them to seek for those things that alone can give peace and rest—the grace of Christ, the joy of holiness. Through influences seen and unseen, our Saviour is constantly at work to attract the minds of men from the unsatisfying pleasures of sin to the infinite blessings that may be theirs in Him. To all these souls, who are vainly seeking to drink from the broken cisterns of this world, the divine message is addressed, “Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

Revelation 22:17. {SC 28.1}

You cannot atone for your past sins; you cannot change your heart and make yourself holy. But God promises to do all this for you through Christ. You *believe* that promise. You confess your sins and give yourself to God. You *will* to serve Him. Just as surely as you do this, God will fulfill His word to you. If you believe the promise,—believe that you are forgiven and cleansed,—God supplies the fact; you are made whole, just as Christ gave the paralytic power to walk when the man believed that he was healed. It *is* so if you believe it. {SC 51.1}

You are invited to come, to ask, to seek, to knock; and you are assured that you will not come in vain. Jesus says, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” Matthew 7:7, 8. {CT 242.1}

Christ illustrates the willingness of God to bless by the willingness of a father to grant the request of his child. He says, “If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him? Luke 11:11-13. {CT 242.2}

None but the Son of God could accomplish our redemption; for only He who was in the bosom of the Father could declare Him. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it manifest. Nothing less than the infinite sacrifice made by Christ in behalf of fallen man could express the Father’s love to lost humanity. {SC 14.2}

“God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son.” He gave Him not only to live among men, to bear their sins, and die their sacrifice. He gave Him to the fallen race. Christ was to identify Himself with the interests and needs of humanity. He who was one with God has linked Himself with the children of men by ties that are never to be broken. Jesus is “not ashamed to call them brethren” (Hebrews 2:11); He is our Sacrifice, our Advocate, our Brother, bearing our human form before the Father’s throne, and through eternal ages one with the race He has redeemed—the Son of man. And all this that man might be uplifted from the ruin

and degradation of sin that he might reflect the love of God and share the joy of holiness. {SC 14.3}

Through Christ's redeeming work the government of God stands justified. The Omnipotent One is made known as the God of love. Satan's charges are refuted, and his character unveiled. Rebellion can never again arise. Sin can never again enter the universe. Through eternal ages all are secure from apostasy. By love's self-sacrifice, the inhabitants of earth and heaven are bound to their Creator in bonds of indissoluble union. {DA 26.2}

Looking upon man, God saw his desperate rebellion, and He devised a remedy. Christ was His gift to the world for man's reconciliation. The Son of God was appointed to come to this earth to take humanity and by His own example to be a great educating power among men. His experience in man's behalf was to enable men to resist Satan's power. He came to mold character and to give mental power, to shed abroad the beams of true education, that the true aim of life might not be lost sight of. The sons of men had had a practical knowledge of evil; Christ came to the world to show them that He had planted for them the tree of life, the leaves of which are for the healing of the nations. {CT 33.3}

Recommended Reading: *Christ's Object Lessons* Chapter 7 – "Like Unto Leaven"

<https://egwwritings.org/>