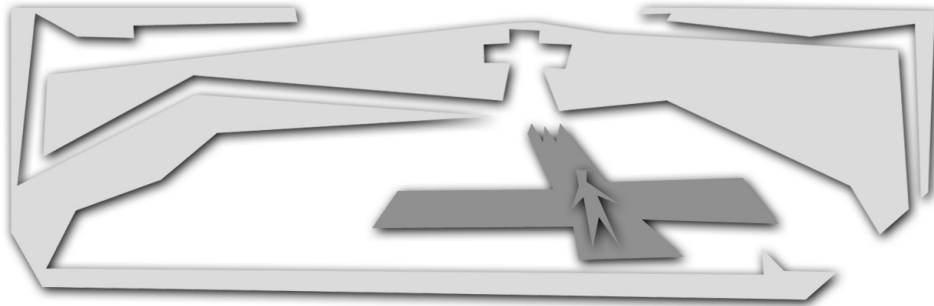


Made Right by Faith



SABBATH—JULY 17

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Romans 3:19–28.

MEMORY VERSE: “We firmly believe that people are made right with God because of their faith. They are not saved by obeying the law” (Romans 3:28, NIV).

IN THIS LESSON WE COME TO THE MAIN IDEA OF ROMANS: justification by faith.¹ The choice of words is based on law. For example, a criminal stands in front of a judge and is judged guilty and sentenced to death for his sins. But a substitute² appears and takes the crimes of the criminal as his own. In this way the substitute clears the criminal.

No one is saying that the criminal is innocent. Everyone knows he is guilty. But the good news is that he is pardoned³ anyway.

In the plan of salvation,⁴ each of us is a criminal. The substitute, Jesus, has a perfect record. And He stands in the court in our place. His righteousness⁵ is accepted in place of our unrighteousness.⁶ So, we are justified (made right) before God because of Jesus. His righteousness becomes ours when we accept it “by faith.” This explains the wording “justification by faith.” Even though we have had a sinful past, we will stand before God righteous because we have accepted Jesus. His righteousness is the only righteousness that can save us.

Talk about good news! In fact, the news cannot get any better than that.

1. justification by faith—the belief that being saved and forgiven depends only on the death of Jesus on the cross for our sins.

2. substitute—someone or something that takes the place of another person or thing. Jesus is our Substitute because He died for our sins.

3. pardoned—being freed from punishment (having to pay the price) for wrongdoing or a crime.

4. plan of salvation—what God has done and is doing to save us from sin.

5. righteousness—God’s character (the qualities, such as goodness and love, that make Him who He is). God’s character, or righteousness (holy life), is given to us by faith in Him; holiness.

6. unrighteousness—not living a holy life.

SUNDAY—JULY 18

THE DEEDS (ACTIONS) OF THE LAW (Romans 3:19, 20)

What is Paul saying in Romans 3:19, 20 about the law? What does the law do, and what can it not do? Why is this so important for all Christians to understand?

Paul is using the word *law* as a Jew in his or her day understood it. By the word *Torah* (the Hebrew word for “law”), a Jew, even today, thinks of the law of God as described in the first five books of Moses and also in the entire Old Testament. The moral law,⁷ along with the laws in the statutes, judgments, and the ceremonial laws,⁸ was a part of God’s education to His people. These smaller laws helped to describe what was included in the perfect character⁹ of a believer. Because of this, many people think of the law as the system¹⁰ of Judaism.

To be under the law means to be under its authority (power). The law shows people how they are weak and guilty before God. The law cannot remove that guilt. But what it can do is help the sinner find a cure for it.

We use the book of Romans today



The law cannot remove guilt.

to help us understand what it means to be under the law. Most people think of law as the moral law. The moral law cannot save people, much like the system of Jewish law could not save the Jews by itself. To save a sinner is not the purpose of the moral law. The purpose of the moral law is to show God’s character¹¹ and to show people where they fail to reflect¹² that character.

The law (moral, ceremonial, civil,¹³ or all of them together) will not make a man righteous in God’s sight. That is not what the law is for. The law is there to point out our sins and weaknesses and to lead us to Christ.

The law cannot save people. Neither can the symptoms (signs) of a disease cure the disease. They just point out the need for the cure. That is how the law works.

7. moral law—the Ten Commandments.

8. ceremonial laws—laws dealing with the sanctuary (the house where God was worshiped by the Jews in Bible times). The sanctuary services helped the Jews to better understand God’s plan for saving them from sin.

9. character—who someone is; all that a person does, feels, and thinks are what he or she is made of.

10. system—a set of beliefs and practices.

11. God’s character—who God is; having and understanding the character of God is the same as being kind, loving, honest, and so on. God’s law (Ten Commandments) shows us His character.

12. reflect—to show something; to make something known.

13. civil (law)—the laws that show how a person must act toward government leaders and the people of his or her own country.

How successful have you been in keeping the law? What does your answer tell you about how impossible it is to be saved by keeping the law?

MONDAY—JULY 19

FAITH AND RIGHTEOUSNESS (Romans 3:21)

This new righteousness is different from righteousness of the law. The old righteousness of the law was the righteousness that the Jews knew. The new righteousness is called “the righteousness of God.” And this righteousness is the only one that God accepts as true.

This is the righteousness that Jesus lived out in His life while here as a Man. This is also the righteousness that Jesus offers to all of us who accept it by faith. This is not faith that people deserve but faith that they need.

“Righteousness is obeying the law. The law demands righteousness. And the sinner owes this righteousness to the law. But he cannot be righteous¹⁴ on his own. The only way in which he can reach righteousness is through faith. By faith the sinner can bring to God the blessings he received from Christ’s sacrifice.¹⁵ And the Lord adds the obedience of His Son to the account of the sinner. Christ’s righteousness is accepted in place of our failure. God receives, pardons [for-

gives], and justifies [makes clean and pure] the believing soul. Then God treats the sinner as if he were righteous, and loves him as He loves His Son.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, page 367. How can you learn to accept this wonderful truth for yourself? (Read also Romans 3:22.)

The faith of Jesus Christ is faith *in* Jesus Christ. Faith is much more than something we accept with our minds. It is also more than just believing certain facts about Christ’s life and His death. True faith in Jesus Christ means accepting Him as Savior, Substitute, and Lord. It means choosing to live like Jesus. It is trusting Him and by faith living a life faithful to His commandments.



God receives the sinner and loves him as He loves His Son.

14. righteous—free from sin or guilt.

15. sacrifice—something or someone of value, such as a life, that is given up to save or to help someone or something else.

TUESDAY—JULY 20

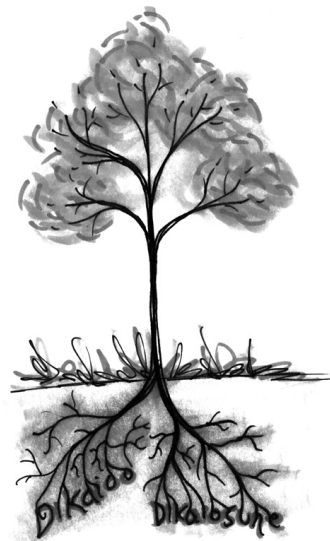
GRACE¹⁶ AND JUSTIFICATION¹⁷
(Romans 3:24)

Remember what we have studied so far about what the law can and cannot do. Then read Romans 3:24. What is Paul saying in these verses? What does it mean that salvation¹⁸ is in Jesus?

What does “justifying” mean in this verse? The Greek word *dikaioo*, translated *justify*, can mean “make righteous,” “declare righteous,” or “consider righteous.” The word comes from the same root (word) as *dikaio-sune*, “righteousness,” and from the word *dikaio-ma*, “righteous requirement.”¹⁹ This shows us that there is a close tie between “justification” and “righteousness.” Some translations²⁰ do not show this clearly. We are justified (made holy) when we are “declared righteous” by God.

Justification makes a person righteous. Without it, he or she is not acceptable to God. But after justification, he or she is righteous in God’s eyes. He or she is also acceptable to Him.

And this happens only through God’s grace. *Grace* means “favor.” For example, a sinner turns to God for



The Greek word *dikaioo* (making clean) comes from the same root as *dikaio-sune* (being right with God).

salvation. God’s grace makes it possible for Him to declare that person to be righteous. Even though they do not deserve it, the believer is justified without any goodness on his or her part. He or she is helpless and totally dependent on God’s grace. The person is justified through the redemption²¹ that is in Christ Jesus, who serves as the sinner’s Substitute.

In Romans, justification is shown as happening at a point in time. For example, one minute the sinner is outside, not righteous, and not accepted. But the next minute, after justification, the person is inside, accepted, and righteous.

16. grace—God’s gift of forgiveness and mercy (kindness) that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

17. justification—being forgiven and made clean from sin.

18. salvation—God’s plan for saving sinners from eternal (without end) death.

19. requirement—something needed or demanded.

20. translations—words that have been changed from one language into different languages; words that have been translated.

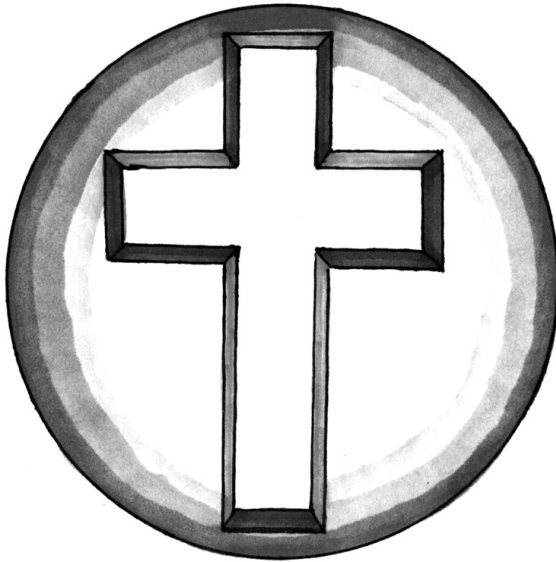
21. redemption—the process (method or way) through which Jesus saves us. He buys us back from sin and sets us free through His death on the cross.

WEDNESDAY—JULY 21

**“HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS
[HOLINESS]” (Romans 3:26, 27, KJV)**

The person who is in Christ thinks of justification as a past act. This act took place when he or she surrendered²² fully to Christ.

But what if the justified sinner lost his or her way and then returned to Christ later? Then justification would happen again. Also, if a person gives his or her life to Christ every day, then justification can be thought of as something we keep going through, again and again.



The moment a person is justified (forgiven) by God, he or she stands accepted inside God's circle of grace.

With the news of salvation being so good, what stops people from accepting it? What kinds of things stop you from accepting all that the Lord promises and offers you?

In Romans 3:25, Paul explains more deeply about the great news of salvation. He uses a big word, *propitiation* (KJV). The Greek word for it, *hilasterion*, is found only twice in the New Testament, here and in Hebrews 9:5. In Hebrews 9:5, *propitiation* means “mercy seat.”²³ In Romans 3:25, propitiation describes the offer of justification (forgiveness) and redemption (being saved) through Christ. Propitiation shows us how sins are removed by the mercy seat in the Old Testament sanctuary.²⁴ What this means is that by His death as our Sacrifice, Jesus has saved us, forgiven us, and paid for our sins. In short, it means that God did what was needed to save us.

Romans 3:25 also talks about the “remission [forgiveness and removal] of sins” (KJV). Our sins make us unacceptable (not pleasing) to God. We can do nothing to take away our sins. But in the plan of salvation, God has given a way for these sins to be paid for through faith in Christ's blood.

The Greek word for “remission” is *paresis*. This means “passing over” or “passing by.” The “passing over” does not mean God ignores our sins. God can pass over the sins of the past because, by His death, Christ has paid the penalty (price) for all our sins.

22. surrendered—to give one's whole life to Jesus.

23. mercy seat—the cover of the ark of the covenant (agreement); on the ark was a lid made of solid gold with two angels looking down toward the ark. This lid was called the mercy seat.

24. sanctuary—the home of God on earth in early Bible times. Here the high priests offered prayers and the blood of animals to God for the sins of the people of Israel.

Anyone who has “faith in His blood” can have his or her sins paid for. This is because Christ has already died for them (1 Corinthians 15:3).

What point is Paul making in Romans 3:26, 27?

Paul wanted to share with his readers the good news of God’s righteousness (holiness). God’s holiness does not come to us by our own works. It comes by faith in Jesus and what He has done for us.

Satan thought God would destroy the world after people sinned. But God sent Jesus to save people instead. What does that tell us about who God is? How should God’s goodness influence²⁵ how we live? What will you do differently in the next 24 hours now that you know what God is like?

THURSDAY—JULY 22

FAITH AND WORKS (Romans 3:28)

Does Romans 3:28 mean that we are not required to obey the law? Explain your answer.

Paul was speaking in Romans 3:28 of Jewish law. No matter how carefully a Jew tried to live under this system, the law could not save him or her. That person could not be made right (justified) if he or she failed to accept Jesus as Savior.

Paul argues that faith does not include boasting. If a man were made righteous by his own actions, he could boast about it. But when he is justified because of Jesus’ sacrifice, then the credit clearly belongs to God. God is the One who justifies (makes right) the sinner.

Works of law cannot forgive and pay for past sins. Justification (forgiveness) cannot be earned. It can be received only by faith in the cleansing (making pure) sacrifice of Christ. So, works of law have nothing to do with justification. To be justified (made right) without works means to be justified without there being anything in ourselves to merit (earn) justification.

But many Christians misunderstand and misuse this verse. They say that all one has to do is to believe. Then they say that works, or obedience to the law of God, are not that important. These people do not understand Paul. In the book of Romans and in other places, Paul shows that obeying God’s law is very important. Jesus certainly obeyed. So did James and John (Matthew 19:17; Romans 2:13; James 2:10, 11; Revelation 14:12). Paul’s point is that obedience to the law does not save a person. But the person who is justified by faith still keeps the law of God. In fact, the justified person is the only one who can keep the law. A sinner who has not been justified can never fulfill what the law asks them to do.

Why is it so easy to get caught in the trap of thinking that we do

25. influence—to have power, or an effect, over persons or things.

not have to obey the law because it does not save us? Have you ever made excuses for sin by saying that we are made righteous (holy) by faith? Why is that such a dangerous way of thinking? Where would we be without the promise of salvation, even when we are tempted (feeling a strong desire) to abuse (treat badly) it?

FRIDAY—JULY 23

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, “The Righteousness of Christ in the Law,” pages 236–239; “Come and Seek and Find,” pages 331–335; “Perfect Obedience Through Christ,” pages 373, 374, in *Selected Messages*, book 1; “Things New and Old,” pages 128, 129, in *Christ’s Object Lessons*.²⁶

“Faith is the condition [what is required] upon which God thinks it is proper [right] to promise pardon [forgiveness] to sinners. Faith, in itself, is not enough to make a person worthy of salvation. Only through Christ’s sacrifice can faith be the cure for sin. Faith allows sinners to have Christ’s perfect life of obedience instead of their own life of disobedience when they come before God. The sinner believes that Christ is his personal Savior. Then God pardons [forgives] his sin and justifies [makes right] him freely. The repentant soul understands that his justification [forgiveness] comes because Christ

has died for him and paid for his sins. Christ also has forgiven the sinner and made him righteous.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, pages 366, 367.

“The law cannot pay the penalty [price] for sin. Instead, the law charges the sinner with all his debt. But Christ has promised pardon to all who repent²⁷ and believe in His mercy.²⁸ The love of God is given fully to the repenting [being sorry for one’s sin], believing soul. The stain [mark] of sin upon the soul can be removed only through the blood of the cleansing Sacrifice . . . of Christ, who is equal with the Father. The work of Christ, His life, suffering, death, and sacrifice for lost sinners makes the law perfect and honorable.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, page 371.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Read the verses for this week. Then, in your own words, write a paragraph about what they say. Share your paragraphs with one another in class.
- ② Think about what it cost to save us: the death of the Son of God. What should that tell us about how bad sin is? If we stopped sinning and never sinned again, why would that still not be enough to make us righteous before God? How can these facts help keep us from falling into sin?

26. object lessons—lessons that use an object or a thing to teach a spiritual (holy) truth. Most often the object comes from nature, such as a flower, an animal, a tree, or a seashell. But the object used to teach the lesson also could be man-made.

27. repent—to say you are sorry for sinning and to turn away from sin with the help of the Holy Spirit.

28. mercy—kind or forgiving treatment of someone who could be treated harshly.