

Wherefore Then Serveth the Law (Gal 3:19)? – Part 8

Extreme responses are generated from the illusion produced over not being able to define and discern between justification 'by faith' and 'through faith'. Not so many years ago, during a question and answer session, I asked a seasoned preacher who was interested in a teaching eldership role within our assembly... "How did an Old Testament saint get saved?" After some time of consideration, he responded by quoting Ephesians 2:8-9. Those who recognize this passage should also know that it was directed towards converted non-covenanted Gentiles (**Eph 2:11-12; 4:1-9**) and has absolutely NOTHING to do with the conversion of Old Testament saints. On the flip side, there are those religious sects and denominations that teach that sacraments and baptism for the remission of sins are essential today for justification and imputation of righteousness.

Paul wrote of a remnant of Jews being saved, at that time, according to election of grace while clarifying what exactly that was and wasn't... it was no longer of works. In other words, 'through faith' and no longer 'by faith'.

Romans 11:5-6 Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. **6** And if by grace, then *is it* no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if *it be* of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.

Even in spite of this clear statement in contrasting a remnant of Israel being saved by the election of grace and not an election of works, there are still those who vehemently deny that works ever had anything to do with justification or imputed righteousness. So, I wonder where in the world (I meant, in the scriptures), would Paul have ever gotten this notion?

Exodus 18:20 And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do.

The law was an election of works to be lived out by one's faith...

Exodus 19:8 And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD.

Habakkuk 2:4 ...but the just shall live by his faith.

The Jew, having been under the Mosaic Covenant for several thousand years, indoctrinated with its blessings and cursing's (Deut 28), had a hard time with the concept of righteousness being imputed by grace without works. Paul was accused of granting a license to sin because of the removal of the works from the law for the righteousness of God to which Paul's reply was, God forbid...

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" **Romans 6:1** "What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid." **Romans 6:15**

How then was Paul ever able to convince the Jew that God was even capable of imputing righteousness via grace and without works?

In God's foreknowledge of saving the Jew, as He now was the Gentile under Paul's ministry of salvation by grace and through faith without works, God left Israel with two O.T. examples that illustrated the two key elements of such a justification; Abraham and David.

Romans 4:1-10 What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? **2** For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath *whereof* to glory; but not before God. **3** For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. **4** Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. **5** But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. **6** Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, **7** *Saying*, Blessed *are* they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. **8** Blessed *is* the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. **9** *Cometh* this blessedness then upon the circumcision *only*, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. **10** How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.

Let it be clear... these aren't two separate examples, but the both put together is THE EXAMPLE of what justification by grace and through faith without works looks like!

Paul points to two actions of God under the O.T. that were EXCEPTIONS to the rule, and NOT the rule!

A. Believing for the imputed righteousness of God – Abraham (**Rom 4:1-3**)

B. Imputation of righteousness and not sin, without works – David (**Rom 4:6-8**)

Abraham, by faith, obeyed God's bidding to leave his country for a land to be shown him for an inheritance as recorded in Genesis 12. However, righteousness was imputed to Abraham in Genesis 15, when simply believing the promise of God regarding an heir coming forth from his own bowels for a promised seed. Typically, righteousness was applied in obedience, but here an exception to the rule is seen and used as illustration. The Jew had based their tie to Abraham pointing back to Genesis 12 (by faith) and Genesis 17 (circumcision).

David, as an exception to the rule, should be even more obvious to the Jew. Jesus Christ was being preached for the forgiveness of sins, for which one could not find forgiveness for under the law:

Acts 13:38-41 Be it known unto you therefore, men *and* brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: **39** And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. **40** Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; **41** Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man (Paul?) declare it unto you.

David was in deep do-do or as Paul would say... 'deep dung' (**Phil 3:8**)! David committed at least two sins (murder & adultery) for which the law made no provision for forgiveness in sacrifice. As a result of David's sins, three things should have happened: **1.** Separated from Israel **2.** Stoned **3.** Died in his transgression. Make no mistake, David did pay for his sins in many ways which included the death of a son, rebellion from within his household and even rejection of his kindship and nation at times. But, the real crisis which David faced is revealed in Psalm's 51, a familiar passage to most... "For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give *it*: thou delightest not in burnt offering. **17** The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." **Psalm 51:16-17**

How did David know that his sins were forgiven? I'll never forget watching a portion of a movie on David, when a freshman attending Letourneau College in Longview, TX, at the student center,

many years ago. Though I have NO idea how David came to final realization as to forgiveness of his sins, a scene was shown that I didn't fully understand at that time that greatly illustrated the point.

The scene portrayed David in great agony over his sins as depicted in Psalms 51. David was fallen prostrate before the ark of God. It was a do or die moment in David's life; this burden of sin had to be lifted or else. David had earlier witnessed the LORD striking Uzzah dead as he placed his hand upon the ark to steady it when the oxen shook it while transporting it to the city of David, after it had been captured earlier by the Philistines. David was quite angered over that response of God (**2 Samuel 6**). Along with all the sound effects, the moment came during the act that had David reaching up in touching the ark of God with end result of God sparing his life; David felt forgiven.

Under Paul's gospel, the Jew had no excuse as to what justification by grace and through faith without works looked like; God's exceptions in Abraham and David painted that picture. Imputed righteousness and not sin via believing and without works.

Next post will compare apples with apples in Romans 10:1-10, as Paul contrasts righteousness under the law with the imputation of righteousness today.

2 Tim 2:15 "Study...!"