



ROMANS 1:16-17

These two verses contain the essence of the Gospel. The concept of salvation resonated with the people of his day. The Gentile world of barbarism gave rise to the need of culture and education. The Greek era in History provided Philosophy to mankind and taught man to reason and think. Despite Greek culture, the world of Paul's day longed for spiritual relevance and freedom. The Roman era that followed exacerbated man's cry for freedom. Under Rome, civil liberties were crushed and freedom was suppressed. The Jewish Religion allowed some balance with ritualistic service and observance of the law & 10 commandments, but the people fell short of God's standard and glory. Greek philosophy could not bring salvation to the human soul and spirit. Roman military might failed to deliver man from the enemy of sin and ungodliness. The Jewish law kept people in bondage and despair and instilled fear and destruction.

FREEDOM THROUGH THE GOSPEL

The Gospel offered salvation to the Greeks, Romans and Jews. Despite his persecution and hostile attacks, Paul could say "I'm proud of the Gospel of Christ because it can deliver the wise, the mighty and the pious". The Revelation of the Mystery was given to Paul in instalments (progressive revelation).

If one seeks to justify himself he inadvertently asserts that he is right. Righteousness or justification, says Paul, has to be coupled with the component of faith. To be just and right with God, takes faith. You have to believe that the Gospel declares you wrong and God right. It reveals your selfish agenda to protect your self-interest. It removes the mask of pretence and double standards.

To be right with God, faith alone in Christ's credentials will liberate your life and shatter the chains of slavery and sin. Paul knew that the Gospel delivered to him could transform men and women caught in the quagmire of religious and cultural quicksand.

JUSTIFICATION

Romans 1:17 became a seminal truth that led to Martin Luther's break through with God.

In brief, **justification comes through faith**. William Barclay's comments on the meaning of Justification are pertinent:

Page 2 / Romans 2 continued

Romans Lesson 2 continued

“The Greek verb that Paul uses for “to justify” is “dikaioun”, of which the first-person singular of the present indicative – “I justify”- which is “dikaioō”. We must be quite clear that the word “justify”, used in this sense, has a different meaning from its ordinary English meaning. If we justify ourselves, we produce reasons to prove that we were right; if someone justifies us, that person produces reasons to prove that we acted in the right way. But all verbs in Greek which end in – oō do not mean to “prove” or to “make” a person or thing to be something; they always mean to “treat”, or “account” or “reckon” a person as something. If God justifies sinners, it does not mean that he finds reasons to prove that they were right – far from it. It does not even mean, at this point, that he makes the sinners good. It means that “God treats sinners as if they had not been sinners at all”. Instead of treating them as criminals to be obliterated, God treats them as children to be loved. That is what “justification” means. It means that God treats us not as his enemies but as his friends, not as bad people deserve but as good people deserve, not as law-breakers to be punished but as men and women to be loved. That is the very essence of the gospel.

JUST AS IF I’VE NEVER SINNED

That means that “to be justified” is to enter into a new relationship with God, a relationship of love and confidence and friendship, instead of one of distance and enmity and fear. We go to a God radiating forgiving and redeeming love. Justification (dikaiosunē) is the right relationship between God and human beings. The person who is just (dikaios) is someone who is in the right relationship, and – here is the supreme point – The one in it is not in it because of anything that he or she has done, but because of what God has done. Such people are in this right relationship not because they have meticulously performed the works of the law, but because in utter faith they have cast themselves on the amazing mercy and love of God.

The phrase “The just shall live by faith” is what inspired Luther to recognise that justification is not based on good works and pious deeds. Luther like other reformers, became known as Protestants because they protested against the false teachings of Rome that penance and observance of rituals could secure salvation.

(SIN—ORIGINAL) (SINS OF COMMISSION & OMISSIONS)

QUESTIONS:

1. What saves us?
2. What are we saved from?
3. Which is the most important relationship of life and why?
Our children, our parents, our Creator or our spouse.
4. Write out the last sentence 1:17^B and commit this verse to memory.
5. Why are Protestants called by this name?

DISCUSS: In what practical way do we as Christians apply the statement: “The just shall live by faith” in our lives?