

LESSON FOUR
JUSTIFICATION IN GOD'S WAY

Scripture Reading:

Justification

3:21-5:11

The definition

3:21-31

Rom. 3:21 But now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been manifested, witness being borne to it by the Law and the Prophets;

Rom. 3:22 Even the righteousness of God through the faith of Jesus Christ to all those who believe, for there is no distinction;

Rom. 3:23 For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Rom. 3:24 Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

Rom. 3:25 Whom God set forth as a propitiation place through faith in His blood, for the demonstrating of His righteousness, in that in His forbearance God passed over the sins that had previously occurred,

Rom. 3:26 With a view to the demonstrating of His righteousness in the present time, so that He might be righteous and the One who justifies him who is of the faith of Jesus.

Rom. 3:27 Where then is boasting? It is excluded. Through what kind of law? That of works? No, but through the law of faith.

Rom. 3:28 For we account that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.

Rom. 3:29 Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not of the Gentiles also? Yes, of the Gentiles also,

Rom. 3:30 If indeed God is one, who will justify the circumcision out of faith and the uncircumcision through faith.

Rom. 3:31 Do we then make the law of no effect through faith? Absolutely not! Rather, we establish the law.

OUTLINE:

I. The Righteousness of God

- A. God in Justice and Rightness—Rom. 3:21-22; 1:17; 10:3; Phil. 3:9
- B. Christ as the Righteousness of God to the Believers—1 Cor. 1:30
- C. The Believers Made the Righteousness of God in Christ—2 Cor. 5:2
- D. Justification—Being Approved according to the Standard of God's Righteousness

II. The Redemption of Christ

- A. The Atonement in the Old Testament—Lev. 16:34; 25:9
 - 1. The Expiation—Lev. 25:9; Num. 5:8
 - 2. The Expiatory Cover of the Ark—Exo. 25:17-22; Lev. 16:14; Heb. 9:5
- B. The Redemption in the New Testament
 - 1. The Propitiation—1 John 2:2; 4:10; Heb. 9:5
 - 2. The Redemption—Gal. 3:13; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 10:12; 9:28
 - 3. The Reconciliation—Rom. 5:10, 11

III. The Righteousness of God having been Manifested—Rom. 1:17

- A. Without Law
- B. Through Faith of Jesus Christ—Rom. 3:22; Heb. 12:2
- C. Having Meeting the Requirements of God's Righteous Law and God's Glory—Rom. 3:23

IV. The Righteousness of God having been Shown

- A. To the Old Testament Saints
- B. To the New Testament Saints—Rom. 3:24, 26

V. Boasting Being Excluded—Rom. 3:27

VI. One God Justifying Two Peoples—Rom. 3:30

QUESTIONS:

SECTION 1

1. What is the righteousness of God?
2. How can we become the righteousness of God?
3. What is justification? What is the basis of God's justification for man?

SECTION 2

1. What is the meaning of propitiation? Please use two verses to show that Christ is our propitiatory sacrifice for our sins.
2. What is the difference between propitiation and redemption?
3. What is the difference between propitiation and reconciliation? Why do we need reconciliation?

SECTION 3

1. When was the righteousness of God manifested to us? And how?
2. According to section 3, what is the position and ground to meet God? Please give a verse to reveal that position in Romans.
3. Based on this section, in the relationship between God and man, who justifies whom first? Please relate it to your experience.

SECTION 4

1. Please use an illustration to explain how the righteousness of God was shown to the Old Testament saints.
2. How is the righteousness of God shown to the New Testament saints?
3. What is God's purpose in justifying us all, both the Jews and the Gentiles?

[Section 1]

Now we come to the section on justification, a most significant doctrine (3:21-5:11)...We have to understand how justification relates to propitiation, redemption, and reconciliation. In this message, we shall cover all these terms and seek to make them clear. However, we first need to consider the righteousness of God.

I. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

A. God in Justice and Rightness

What is the righteousness of God? We may say that the righteousness of God is what God is with respect to justice and rightness (Rom. 3:21-22; 1:17; 10:3; Phil. 3:9). God is just and right. Whatever God is in His justice and rightness constitutes His righteousness. Furthermore, all that God is in His justice and rightness is actually Himself. Therefore, the righteousness of God is God Himself. The righteousness of God is a Person, not merely a divine attribute.

B. Christ as the Righteousness of God to the Believers

Many Christians say incorrectly that they have the righteousness of Christ. We should not say this. Our righteousness is not the righteousness of Christ; it is Christ Himself. Christ Himself as a Person, not His attribute of righteousness, has been made the righteousness of God to us (1 Cor. 1:30). Do not say that the righteousness of Christ has become your righteousness. Instead you should say, "Christ is my righteousness. My righteousness before God is the living Person of Christ, not an attribute. The righteous Christ is mine." God has made Christ, who is the very embodiment of God Himself, our righteousness.

C. The Believers Made the Righteousness of God in Christ

Second Corinthians 5:21 says that the believers are made the righteousness of God in Christ. Paul does not say that the believers are made righteous; he says that they are made righteousness. We have been made the righteousness of God in Christ. This is a deep matter. How can we become the righteousness of God? By having Christ wrought into us. We have seen that Christ is the embodiment of God, and that God, as a living Person, is righteousness. Therefore, righteousness, God, and Christ are one. The righteousness of God is God Himself. Since this God is embodied in Christ, Christ is the righteousness of God. Christ has been wrought into us, and we have been put into Christ. We have been mingled together with Christ as one. Thus, we become the righteousness of God. Paul declares, "For to me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21). As Christ has been wrought into us,

we can say with Paul, "For to me to live is Christ." Suppose we have a glass of water. Once tea has been blended with it, it no longer is plain water; it is tea. Likewise, once Christ has been wrought into us, we become one with Him.

The righteousness of God is not only God Himself in His justice and rightness, and it is not only the living Person of Christ; it is also we who have been made one with Christ. The living Person of Christ as God's righteousness has been wrought into us, and we have been put into Him. Therefore, we have been made the righteousness of God. We must proclaim, "I am the righteousness of God. I have been justified. God is righteousness, and I am too. I am the righteousness of God in Christ. I am what God is. I'm fully justified. God and I have been identified.

D. Justification—Being Approved according to the Standard of God's Righteousness

What is justification? Justification is God's action in approving people according to His standard of righteousness. His righteousness is the standard, not ours. Although we think we are righteous, our righteousness is only a quarter inch high. Regardless of how righteous we are or how righteous we think we are, our righteousness is just a fraction of an inch high. How high is God's righteousness? It is unlimited! Can you be approved by God according to your own righteousness? This is impossible. Although you may be right with everyone—with your parents, your children, and your friends—your righteousness will never justify you before God. You may justify yourself according to your standard of righteousness, but that does not enable you to be justified by God according to His standard. We need justification by faith. Justification by faith before God means we are approved by God according to the standard of His righteousness.

How can God do this? He can do it because our justification is based upon the redemption of Christ. When the redemption of Christ is applied to us, we are justified. If there were no such redemption, it would be impossible for us to be justified by God. Redemption is the basis of justification.

II. THE REDEMPTION OF CHRIST

A. The Atonement in the Old Testament

As we come to the subject of the redemption of Christ, we need to consider the atonement in the Old Testament (Lev. 16:34; 25:9).

1. The Expiation

The atonement in the Old Testament was an expiation (Lev. 25:9; Num. 5:8). Expiation means

to appease God for us, to conciliate God by satisfying His righteous requirements.

2. The Expiatory Cover of the Ark

The expiatory cover (rendered “mercy seat” by the King James Version) was the lid of the ark (Exo. 25:17-22; Lev. 16:14; Heb. 9:5). Under this cover was the law which was called the testimony of God (Exo. 25:21). Why was it called the testimony of God? Because the law testifies of what God is. God is fully testified and expressed by His law. Above the expiatory cover were the cherubim of glory, signifying the expression of God (Exo. 25:19-20; Heb. 9:5; Rom. 3:23). Therefore, under the cover was the testimony of God, showing what kind of God He is, and above the cover were the cherubim of glory, expressing the glory of God.

The expiatory cover was sprinkled with the expiatory blood (Lev. 16:14, cf. 18). On the day of atonement, or, as is better to say, the day of expiation, the blood of the expiatory sacrifice was shed, brought into the holiest of holy, and sprinkled upon the expiatory cover. That blood was a speaking blood. At that time, some problems existed between God and the people. Everyone had sinned against God and was short of God’s glory. Thus, two problems—the problem of sins and the problem of falling short of God’s glory—existed between God and the people, creating a separation between them. There was no way for them to come together. Although the people needed God’s grace, and although God had grace to dispense to them, there was no way for the two parties to approach one another. Expiation was the way...In the Old Testament times, the way of atonement, that is of expiation, required a sacrifice in which blood was shed. This blood was brought into the holiest of holy and sprinkled upon the cover of the ark. As we have seen, under this cover was the law exposing and condemning the people as they approached God, and above the cover were the cherubim of glory observing everything. As the blood of atonement was sprinkled upon the cover of the ark, it satisfied the righteous requirements of God’s law and it fulfilled the demands of God’s glory. Therefore, upon the expiatory cover of the ark God could meet with man, speak to man, and fellowship with man in a lawful way without contradicting His righteousness or glory. It was in this place that God and man were made one. That was the atonement, the expiation.

[Section 2]

B. The Redemption in the New Testament

1. The Propitiation

The expiation in the Old Testament was a type of the propitiation in the New Testament.

Propitiation is mentioned at least five times in the New Testament. In 1 John 2:2 and 4:10 we are told that Christ, the Son of God, is Himself the propitiation for our sins. In both places the word propitiation actually means a sacrifice and should be rendered “propitiatory sacrifice.” The Greek word in these verses is hilasmos, which means “that which propitiates,” that is, a propitiatory sacrifice. In 1 John 2:2 and 4:10 the Lord Jesus is the propitiatory sacrifice for our sins. Another Greek word regarding propitiation, hilasterion, is found in Hebrews 9:5 and Romans 3:25. Hilasterion means the place where propitiation was made. The proper reference books indicate that the word hilasterion in these two verses means the place of propitiation, and the King James Version renders it as “mercy seat.” In the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, hilasterion is the word for the term “mercy seat” in Exodus 25 and Leviticus 16. Thus, hilasterion is the place of propitiation. Furthermore, in Hebrews 2:17 is the word hilaskomai, the verbal form of the noun hilasmos. The King James Version translates hilaskomai as “make reconciliation for”; however, it should be translated “propitiate.” Christ propitiates for our sins. The matter of propitiation is mentioned five times in the New Testament in relation to Christ: twice it refers to Christ Himself as the propitiatory sacrifice, twice it refers to the place where propitiation was accomplished, and once it refers to the action of propitiation.

In addition to these five references to propitiation in the New Testament, we find the same root used by the publican in his prayer in the temple (Luke 18:13). According to the King James Version, the publican prayed, “God, be merciful to me.” However, the Greek means, “Propitiate for me.” The publican actually was saying, “O God, propitiate for me. I am sinful in Your eyes. I need propitiation.”

What is the meaning of propitiation? How shall we distinguish it from redemption on the one hand and reconciliation on the other? If we read the New Testament carefully, we will discover that reconciliation includes propitiation. Nevertheless, there is a difference between them. Propitiation means that you have a problem with another person. You have either offended him or else you owe him something. For instance, if I wrong you or am otherwise in debt to you, a problem exists between us. Because of this problem or debt, you have a demand upon me, and unless your demand is satisfied the problem between us cannot be resolved. Thus, there is the need for propitiation.

The Greek word hilasmos implies that I have wronged you and that now I am indebted to you. There is a problem between us that hinders our

relationship. Propitiation, therefore, involves two parties, one of which has wronged the other, has become indebted to the other, and must act to satisfy the demands of the other. If the offending party is to appease the offended party, he must fulfill his demands. The Septuagint uses the word *hilasmos* for the word atonement in Leviticus 25:9 and Numbers 5:8 because this Greek word means to conciliate two parties and make them one. This is a matter of atonement.

The meaning of atonement is to bring two parties into one. When two parties have been separated and seek to be in oneness, there is the need for propitiation. This is atonement. The action of propitiation is atonement. Propitiation means to make us one with God because there had been a separation between us and God. What was the problem that kept us from God, that made it impossible to have direct fellowship with Him? The problem was our sins. Our sins kept us away from God's presence and hindered God from coming to us. Therefore, we needed propitiation to appease God's demands. Christ accomplished this on the cross when He offered Himself as the propitiatory sacrifice. On the cross He propitiated for us and brought us back to God, making us one with God.

2. The Redemption

What is the difference between propitiation and redemption? The word redeem means to purchase back something which originally was yours but which had become lost. This hymnal belongs to me. If the hymnal becomes lost and I pay the price of buying it back, I would be redeeming the hymnal. Thus, redemption means to repurchase at a cost.

We originally belonged to God. We were His possession. However, we were lost. Nevertheless, God did not give us up. He paid the price to have us back, repurchasing us at a great cost. This is redemption. Even after we had become lost, He desired to regain us. However, this was not easy for God to do because our being lost involved us in sins and in many other things that were against His righteousness, holiness, and glory. Because we were lost we had many problems with God in respect to His righteousness, holiness, and glory. We were under a threefold demand, the demand of righteousness, holiness, and glory. Many requirements were laid upon us, and it was impossible for us to fulfill them. The price was too great. God paid the price for us, repurchasing us at a tremendous cost. Christ died on the cross to accomplish eternal redemption for us (Gal. 3:13; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 10:12; 9:28). His blood has obtained eternal redemption for us (Heb. 9:12, 14; 1 Pet. 1:18-19).

3. The Reconciliation

The problem of being an enemy is even more serious than the problem that necessitates propitiation. If I am your enemy, propitiation is inadequate. I need reconciliation. Sinners need propitiation; enemies need reconciliation. Enmity is the greatest problem between man and God. When we were enemies of God, we not only needed propitiation, but also reconciliation. Propitiation mainly deals with sins; reconciliation deals with enmity as well as sins. Therefore, reconciliation includes propitiation. Romans 5 tells us that before we were saved we were both sinners and enemies. As sinners we needed propitiation and as enemies we needed reconciliation. Herein lies the difference between propitiation and reconciliation: propitiation is for sins; reconciliation is both for sins and enmity.

Reconciliation is based upon Christ's redemption (Rom. 5:10, 11) and was accomplished through God's justification (2 Cor. 5:18-19; Rom. 5:1, 11). Hence, reconciliation is the issue of redemption with justification.

In the previous points we mainly covered the definition of various terms—the righteousness of God, justification, propitiation, redemption, and reconciliation. Once we have the proper definition of these terms, we can understand what it means to be justified. Now we shall deal directly with justification.

[Section 3]

III. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD HAVING BEEN MANIFESTED

What is justification? Justification means that the righteousness of God has been manifested. Although the righteousness of God has existed for ages, it was not manifested to us until we believed in the Lord and called on His name. Then the righteousness of God was revealed to us. When God's righteousness is revealed, it is manifested. It is manifested to us when we believe in the Lord Jesus. The manifestation of God's righteousness is mentioned twice in the book of Romans. Romans 1:17 says that the righteousness of God is revealed out of faith to faith. The righteousness of God is manifested in the gospel out of our faith and to our faith. Then Romans 3:21 says that the righteousness of God has been manifested without law, being witnessed by the law and the prophets.

A. Without Law

That the righteousness of God has been manifested without law means it has nothing to do with the law. Never mix the righteousness of God with the law. They must be kept separate. God's righteousness has nothing to do with the law. We

can never obtain God's righteousness by going to the law. As far as God's righteousness is concerned, the law is over. The law was the old dispensation. Now without law, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been manifested through faith of Jesus Christ.

B. Through Faith of Jesus Christ

Genuine believing is to believe in the Lord Jesus by His faith. We believe in Jesus Christ by His faith, for we have no faith of our own. Jesus is the Author and Finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:2). The more we look at ourselves and examine ourselves, the faster our faith disappears. Faith is not our invention; it can never be initiated by us. It is impossible for us to generate faith. Faith is an aspect of Christ Himself. In fact, faith is Christ. Galatians 2:20 says that we live by the faith of the Son of God. I do not live by my faith—I have no faith of my own—but by the faith of the Son of the living God who has faith and who Himself is faith to me. If you look at yourself, you will never find faith, but if you forget about yourself and say, "O Lord Jesus, I love You," faith will immediately rise up within you. This faith is the faith of Jesus, or we may say it is Jesus believing within us. Thus, the phrase "through faith of Jesus Christ" means believing in Jesus Christ by His faith.

C. Meeting the Requirements of God's Righteous Law and God's Glory

The righteousness of God has been manifested to meet the requirements of His righteous law and His glory (3:23). When we believe in the Lord Jesus, we receive the righteousness of God which meets all the requirements of God. In Romans 3 we find that the requirements of God are of two categories: the requirements of His righteousness and His glory. Paul clearly mentions God's law and God's glory. We have all broken the law and we have all come short of the glory. Therefore, Romans 3:23 says that all have sinned and come short of God's glory.

Why does Paul suddenly mention the glory of God? The answer involves the propitiation cover mentioned in verse 25. As Paul was writing this part of Romans, he probably had in his mind the picture of the ark of the testimony, especially the propitiation cover. Upon this cover were the cherubim of glory. As we have already pointed out, underneath the cover was the law exposing the sinfulness of people and condemning them, and above the cover were the two cherubim representing God's glory and observing every action of the people. Underneath the cover was the exposing law; above the cover were the watching and observing cherubim. The exposing and condemning law signified the requirements of God's righteousness according to the law, and the

observing cherubim signified the requirements of God's glory according to the expression of God. Unless these requirements were fulfilled and God was satisfied, there was no way for sinners to contact God and for God to communicate with them. Hallelujah for the expiating blood! The expiating blood was sprinkled upon the propitiation cover, meeting the requirements of the righteous law and of God's glory.

Propitiation is not only an action; it is a place. Propitiation is a place where God can meet with man. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul was bold to say that this propitiation place is Jesus Christ. God has set forth Christ Jesus as a propitiation cover (3:25), and this propitiation cover is the propitiation place where God can meet with man. This place is the Person of Jesus Christ the Lord. Although many Christians love the Lord Jesus and realize that He is so much to them, they may not know that Christ is a propitiation place where God can meet with us and where we can contact God. Before we knew of this place, we were frightened by the thought of approaching God, but now we are no longer afraid of Him. Upon Christ as the propitiation cover we can meet with God. This is the meaning of Paul's writing in Romans 3. He used the type of the ark with its cover to show the meaning of justification.

In this universe the Lord Jesus has been set forth as the propitiation place, and all sinners may come to meet God upon Him. Where are we today? We are on the propitiation place. We do have a position, a ground to meet with God, and God has the same ground to communicate with us. Where is the law? The law is under the propitiation cover; it is covered by the propitiating Christ. Where is God's glory? It is above us, yet it has no claim against us because we are upon Christ as the propitiation place. Here we are justified. On this propitiation cover we are the same as God in His righteousness. We and God correspond to one another and are mutually approved. We approve God, and God approves us; God justifies us, and we justify Him.

According to our experience, it was not God who firstly approved us, but we who approved God. We do not know how much time God spent to convince us of His righteousness. We were rebellious and said, "I don't like God. God is not right." We all thought this way before we were saved. Many people speak against God saying, "If God is right, why are there so many poor people on the earth? If God is right, why is there no justice among the nations?" They admit that there is God, but claim that He is not righteous. Many of us can testify the same thing, confessing that we thought God was wrong, that He was not righteous. However, God has been patient with us, doing

many things for us until He finally convinced us of His righteousness. Who justified whom first? We firstly justified God. When we were convinced by God of His righteousness, we justified Him and wept in repentance, saying, “God, forgive me. I’m so sinful and unclean. I need Your forgiveness.” When we called on the name of the Lord Jesus, we not only were put into Christ but upon Christ. Now we are upon Christ as our propitiation place where God and we can justify one another. We declare, “God, You are righteous. I have no problem with You.” Then God replies, “Dear child, I have no problem with you either.” Firstly, we approved God; then God approved us. We justified God; then God justified us.

Where are we now? We are on Jesus Christ as the propitiation place. We are on the propitiation cover. The law is under our feet, and the glory of God is over our head satisfied. The law has been silenced; it can no longer speak against us, but the glory of God can rejoice over us with satisfaction. Here upon the propitiation cover we enjoy God’s full justification.

[Section 4]

IV. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD HAVING BEEN SHOWN

A. To the Old Testament Saints

The righteousness of God was shown to the Old Testament saints in God’s passing by their sins. Paul uses this term “passing by” in Romans 3:25. During Old Testament times, the sins of the people had not been taken away, but only covered by the expiating blood. Their sins were not carried away until Jesus Christ died on the cross. “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” (John 1:29). Before the Lord Jesus died on the cross, the sins of the Old Testament saints still remained, although they were covered with the blood of the type of Christ. God had to pass by their sins because He is righteous...In passing by those covered sins God showed forth His righteousness.

Let me illustrate. Suppose I owe a certain person a billion dollars. Although it is impossible for me to pay this amount, I am bound by that person to pay him. However, I have a friend who is a billionaire. My friend proceeds to tell both parties that there is no problem, that he himself will pay the full debt, and he writes a promissory note as evidence. Once the promissory note has been delivered and accepted, I must be released because of righteousness. Likewise, the Old Testament saints owed God a tremendous amount, but there was a promissory note—the blood of the expiatory sacrifice sprinkled on the propitiation cover—which guaranteed that Christ would come to take

away sins. This promissory note covered all the sins of the Old Testament saints. Christ redeemed the promissory note when He died on the cross and paid the full price. Therefore, because of His righteousness God had to pass by their sins. In so doing, He has shown His righteousness to the Old Testament saints. This is the meaning of Romans 3:25.

B. To the New Testament Saints

God’s righteousness has been shown to the New Testament saints in God’s justifying them. God has justified us freely by His grace through the redemption in Christ and through the faith of Jesus (3:24, 26). Since Christ has paid the price for our sins and has accomplished the full redemption to meet all of God’s requirements, God, in order for Him to be just, must justify us. On God’s side justification is by His righteousness; on our side justification is by His free grace as compared with justification by the work of the law. To be justified by the work of the law we need to work, but to be justified by the redemption in Christ there is no need of our work; it is freely given by His grace. We do not deserve it. But God is bound by His righteousness to justify us because of the redemption of Christ which meets all His requirements. Thus, God has shown His righteousness to the Old Testament saints in passing by their sins and to the New Testament saints in justifying them. God’s dealing with us today is not simply to pass by our sins, but to justify us. God has justified us.

V. BOASTING BEING EXCLUDED

Because of this, boasting is excluded. None of us has anything of which to boast. We have not been justified by the law of works, but by the law of faith (3:27). This faith does not originate with us; it is of the living Christ.

VI. ONE GOD JUSTIFYING TWO PEOPLES

God is one. This one God justifies both the Jews and the Gentiles (3:30). He is the God both of Jews and Gentiles (3:29). In saying this Paul paves the way for the Body of Christ. If God’s dealing with people differed from one group to another, it would be difficult to have the Body life. However, God has one way of dealing with all people, and this one God with His one way brings the different peoples together as one. Whether we are Jews or Gentiles, it is the one God who justifies us all. Among us we have a number of Jewish brothers and sisters, and God has justified them in the same way as He has justified us, the Gentiles. The one God has justified all of us that we may be one as the Body of Christ.

God justifies the circumcision out of faith and the uncircumcision through faith. Notice the prepositions: the Jews, the circumcision, are justified out of faith; the Gentiles, the uncircumcision, are justified through faith. What does this mean? The Jews have a position before God as His people. In spite of their unbelief and apparent uncleanness, the Jews still have the position as God's people. We must recognize this and be careful how we refer to the Jews, for God will say of them, "They are My people." Having the standing as God's people makes a great difference, and we need to respect it. In Genesis 12:3 God promised to Abraham, the forefather of the Jews, that whoever blessed him would be blessed by God and that whoever cursed him would be cursed by God. God continues to fulfill Genesis 12:3. Whoever touches the Jews in the way of cursing will be cursed. Throughout the past 25 centuries there has been no exception: every individual and nation, that has cursed the Jews has been cursed and everyone who has blessed the Jews has been blessed.

Although the Jews are conditionally not right with God today, they are still the people of God positionally. Elsewhere in Romans Paul says that God's selection is irrevocable (11:28-29). The Jewish people are God's selection, and God's selection is eternal. Regardless of how unbelieving the Jews are at present, they still are the people of God positionally. Therefore, when God justifies the Jews, He justifies them out of faith, not through faith. Why is it not through faith? Because the Jews have the position already. However, when God justifies the Gentiles, He must justify them through faith because they are far away from God. There is a great distance between the Gentiles and God. Since the Jews, the circumcision, already have the position, they are justified out of faith; since the Gentiles are a great distance from God, they are justified through faith. It is through faith that the Gentiles reach the right position. In both cases it is a matter of faith.

One God justifies us all. Both Jews and Gentiles are under one God and in one way. Paul's word in Romans 3:29-30 prepares the way for the Body of Christ in chapter 12. Whether we are Jewish believers or Gentile believers, we are one Body in Christ under the one economy of the one God

