



FEED MY SHEEP

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Salvation is a Process: Justification

These short monthly monograph studies are designed to acquaint the reader with various aspects of our Christian Way. Since they are brief, we cannot hope to cover the level of depth that a given topic may deserve. For greater depth of understanding, we provide our taped Bible studies and lectures.

Our current lengthy series of taped studies on the Tabernacle in the Wilderness is one in which we have given part of the bottom line up front, but we still reserve a wonderful and beautiful revelation for the culmination of the series. The topic of this month's FMS is drawn from one of the major themes (bottom lines) of the Tabernacle studies; namely, that salvation is a process.

Many Christians are blissfully ignorant of this important fact. They believe that once they have "made a decision for Jesus" (been "born again" or similar terminology), that they are "saved." Others add water baptism to the requirements for salvation. In both cases, many of these dear brethren then go to church, Sunday school and prayer meetings the rest of their lives with the primary intent of getting their friends and loved ones to take that initial step as they have, thinking all the while that their "getting saved" is all there is to it. We are not saying that "getting saved" (as they understand it) is wrong; it is simply incomplete; it is only the first step. Nor are we saying that these good folks who truly love Jesus are going to be denied entrance into the kingdom of heaven. But remember, that all Christians will not be of equal rank in the kingdom (Mat. 5:19). Thus it is our purpose to teach beyond the basics, to show that there is more, that one can strive for the High Calling. (Phi. 3:14) But how can one seek the higher calling if one does not even know there is such a thing. Nor does simply reading that verse in Philippians necessarily imply that the person will understand what he reads; that is why God called some to be teachers.

Another of the key themes of our Tabernacles studies is that everything in and concerned with the Tabernacle is a figure (type, symbol, shadow, pattern, parable, allegory) of some greater reality.

Hebrews 9:8 ... while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: 9 Which was a figure [Gk: *parabole* (parable)] for the time then present, ...

Consequently we have been proceeding from the Outer Courtyard inward, eventually to arrive at the Holy of Holies, examining each and every detail of the Tabernacle in order to understand what that greater reality is. Of course, everything in the Tabernacle represents or concerns our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, in some way; but there is much more to the symbolism. As stated earlier, one of the main themes we discovered (not that this teacher "discovered," but that we all are learning and discovering together) is that salvation is a process. It is clearly typified in the Tabernacle. The three main areas of the Tabernacle are the (Outer) Court(yard), the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place (Holy of Holies). These represent the three stages in the process of complete salvation of spirit, soul and body. The theological, Biblical terms for these three phases are justification, sanctification and glorification.

The Court represents the first phase of salvation, our justification. Those who have become "born again" and been baptized are still in the Courtyard area. In this issue, we will elaborate on the doctrine of justification. First, though, for those who are new to this concept of a three-stage process of salvation, we offer further corroboration. The words of Jesus, the writings of Paul and other New Testament writers at times refer to salvation as an accomplished fact, and other times as a continuing process, and still other times as a future event or future reality. We illustrate the point with the following Scrip-

tures (many others witness the same):

1. *Salvation as an accomplished fact (past):*

Luke 7:50 And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.

NKJ Rom. 8: 24 For we were saved in this hope, ...

2. *Salvation as an on-going process (present):*

NKJ Acts 2:47 ... And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

1 Cor 1:18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

3. *Salvation as a future reality:*

Acts 15: 11 But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.

Romans 5:10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

Without an understanding of the progressive nature of our salvation, the above sets of verses would appear to be contradictory. The New Testament does not conflict with the Old, and this three-phase process is in perfect accordance with the patterns of the Old Testament Tabernacle in the Wilderness. Let us then commence to examine the first step: justification.

Brief historical review

Roman Catholicism excepted, it is generally acknowledged that corruption of many true doctrines began early in the church, even in the Apostolic Era. A thousand years later, the Bible truths of justification (coupled with the false threat of eternal torture in hell fire) had been blurred and distorted to such an extent that the people of western Christendom were forever in fear for their salvation. As a result of the false teachings of the church (Roman Catholicism), the people were enslaved politically and economically as well as spiritually. It was the era known as the Dark Ages. The Roman church—a whitewashed sepulchre—was supreme in matters of church and state.

Any one or any group which dared dissent was persecuted mercilessly, most eventually being tracked down, tortured and martyred. (E.g: the Vaudois, Waldensians, Cathars, John Huss, etc.) It's not nice to fool with Mother Church! Any dissent threatened their political power; hence, none was tolerated. To further discourage dissent

and consolidate their power, even the Bible was taken from the people and kept chained to the pulpits in the church buildings. Possession of a personal copy of the Scriptures usually resulted in the execution of the offender. Add to this the fact that the Bible remained in the Latin tongue and only the priests and church hierarchy were educated in Latin. In the Dark Ages, most of the populace were illiterate, period.

But at God's appointed time, the truth began to re-emerge. Though not the first "protester" against the abuses of the Roman Catholic system and its false doctrines, Martin Luther was called by God to be the spark to ignite what became known as the Protestant Reformation. Ironically, Luther never intended to depart the Roman church, only to reform it. He was a monk of the Augustinian order whose personal, spiritual struggles led him to delve deeply into the Scriptures. His spiritual status vis-a-vis salvation tormented him continually. Through his strict Catholic upbringing, he had come to believe that personal salvation is wrought by faith AND works. Honestly facing the fact that, try as he might, he still fell into sin, Luther's faith wavered continually. He realized he could never be good enough to merit salvation by his works. ("Good enough" being defined as keeping the "works" of God's laws perfectly.)

Despite his being many times almost to the point of total despair of his eternal salvation, Luther kept reading and studying the Scriptures, particularly the writings of Paul. Then one day, the Lord illuminated his understanding of certain Scripture passages. This "eureka" moment not only liberated Martin Luther from his spiritual agony, but it was the catalyst which eventually liberated much of northern Europe from the bondage of Roman Catholic tyranny as well. Providentially, God brought about via Johannes Gutenberg the invention of the printing press within a few decades of Luther's defiance, and thus the Word of God was able to be mass produced and distributed to the people in their own languages. This effected an "end run" around Rome's old "chain-it-to-the-pulpit" and "keep-it-in-Latin" tricks.

The key, the linchpin, the pivotal doctrine which sparked the Protestant Reformation was Luther's rediscovery of the truth of our justification by faith alone (*sola fide*). The truth had been right there in God's Word all along. But the traditions and corruptions of centuries of Roman Catholicism had forged such a prison of spiritual blindness and captivity that no one saw or dared utter these truths until God empowered Luther to do so. Over those centuries, the church of Rome had developed a "both-and" theology: both faith *and* works, both grace *and* free will, both the Bible *and* the church's pronounce-

ments, both Christ *and* Mary. In contrast, the denominational descendants of classical Protestantism (few though they are today) have adhered vigorously to the theology of faith alone (*sola fide*), grace alone (*sola gratia*), Scripture alone (*sola scriptura*) and Christ alone (*solus Christus*). Unfortunately, many (even the majority) of the evangelical and mainline denominations have strayed from *sola gratia* by falling into Pelagianism and Arminianism.¹ Let us now explore from the Scriptures the truth of justification that Luther rediscovered.

What is justification?

We have already stated that justification is the first in a three-stage process of salvation, but what does the word itself mean? What does it entail? Paul is the premier expositor of this doctrine. He spends the first five chapters in his epistle to the Romans dealing primarily with this subject. He gives it to us in a nutshell by quoting the Old Testament prophet Habakkuk (2:4). Paul says:

Romans 1:17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

The light bulb went off in Luther's mind when he realized the implication of that short statement: the just shall live by faith. "Not by works!" he thought. "Hallelujah!" The word "just" has a very special meaning theologically. The word "just" here refers to a righteous person. Luther realized that he was not righteous. In everyday language there is a relative righteousness and an absolute righteousness. One person might be a morally better person than his neighbor, and so be said to be "righteous" in comparison with other men, but only God is absolutely and totally righteous, and this is the usual sense in the Bible. Paul states categorically:

Romans 3:10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

We can identify with Martin Luther as he agrees with the Scriptures: "Yes, that is me, a sinner; I am not righteous." The problem is that our state of being not-righteous disqualifies us from fellowship with God. Justification is the first step in the solution to this temporary tragedy. Theologically, justification is a legal term by which someone is *accounted*, or *reckoned* or *declared* "righteous," even though he is not actually righteous. In other words, we say the sinner has been justified.

It is similar to a court proceeding in which the accused is acquitted or declared "not guilty." This analogy, however, falls short of the biblical meaning because an acquittal or "not guilty" verdict could be the result of lack of sufficient evidence, whereas the Lord God sees all, including the thoughts of our hearts, and he knows we are

not righteous, and yet he reckons us as though we were righteous. That is what is meant by justification. We now understand why we need to be justified: because we are sinners and sinners cannot have fellowship with God. But this begs the question...

How did we get in this mess in the first place?

Or stated otherwise, how did we come to be sinners anyhow? This is critically important. To understand how it came about, we begin with Adam in the Garden of Eden. By disobedience Adam fell. Paul then refers to this and its result upon us.

Romans 5: 19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners,...

First, let us understand that the "many" who were made sinners is not "all," because Christ is the exception. Jesus is the only person who ever lived who did not sin. But as for the rest of us, the many, how did we become sinners? It was because of Adam's disobedience! It was not something that we did which caused us to become sinners. It was something done by someone outside of ourselves. This is the crux of Paul's argument in Romans 5: that in a like manner we are justified; we are declared righteous because of the deed of someone outside of ourselves—that someone being Jesus, of course.

Romans 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that [lit., "upon which"] all have sinned:

Having a correct understanding of this verse is critical to a proper understanding not only of the doctrine of justification (and hence salvation), but also of the entire Plan of God. It is a fact that most of orthodox Christianity misunderstands it, and thus their theology is skewed from the start. Corruption of right doctrine began early on, and the Reformers did not catch and "reform" all the falsehoods which had crept in. Both Roman Catholicism and most of Protestantism believe that at birth, we inherit something from Adam they call "original sin," and that is how we became sinners.

This is not true. We did not inherit any sin from Adam. We inherited mortality from Adam. Read v. 12 again. That is what it says: Because of one man (Adam), sin entered the world. And because of Adam's sin, death (mortality) entered the world. And so mortality was passed upon (inherited by) all men. "Upon which" mortality we all have sinned. Do you see? *We are not mortal because we have sinned. We sin because we are mortal!* It means exactly the opposite of what most Christians think it means.

Unfortunately, while the KJV translation is bad enough (in this verse) for having used the phrase "for that

all have sinned,” most modern translations are worse, rendering it “because all have sinned,” which then reinforces the incorrect notion that we die because we sin.² Aside from the correct translation of this verse as proof of the truth of this concept, there is a simple test which proves that we sin because we are mortal.

Think of a baby in the womb. Sin is the transgression of God’s law (1 John 3:4). A baby *in utero* cannot possibly break God’s laws; therefore, a baby *in utero* cannot sin. The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). If we die because of our own sins, then how could a baby in the womb die or be murdered via abortion? How can a baby who is not a sinner die? A baby can die in the womb not because he/she is a sinner, but because he/she is mortal from the moment of conception. We inherit mortality from Adam, not sin. And because we are mortal, that is why we sin.

Thus, in v. 19 above, we were made sinners because of Adam’s disobedience. But we did not inherit his sin or any sin. His disobedience caused his mortality, and through that mortality which we inherited from him, we were made sinners. Consequently, *we are paying the penalty for our father’s sin*. That doesn’t seem fair, does it? We suffer and die because of something that our first father, Adam, did. But Paul goes on to show that the second Adam, Christ Jesus, was perfect in obedience and that His sacrifice (something outside of ourselves) provided the benefits to us of justification resulting ultimately in our unending and sinless life.

If Adam was our first father, then it follows that Jesus as the second Adam would be our new father in counter-acting (and then some) the effects of the Fall. Jesus is the Son, of course, but He is also the Father. Prophesying of Jesus, Isaiah says:

Isaiah 9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Jesus is God; He and the Father are one; Jesus is the everlasting Father! Those who deny the deity of Christ really have to perform biblical gymnastics to get around that one. Returning to Romans 5, there are much greater implications to this passage than are readily apparent. They are too detailed to try to squeeze in here, so let us review this critical passage in its greater context now.

Romans 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that [lit., “upon which”] all have sinned:

13 (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.

15 But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, *which is* by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.

16 And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification.

17 For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)

18 Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one *the free gift* came upon all men unto justification of life.

19 For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

We will revisit this passage in the next or a later FMS to expound it more thoroughly. But for now, it is very important that we understand this concept of how we became sinners because that is precisely where the major area of contention arose between the Reformers and Rome. We shall examine these differences in the next issue.³

ENDNOTES

1. These unbiblical theologies were explained in detail in our series, now in album form, *The Sovereignty of God*. (10 tapes with charts, exhibits; request A-101, \$33 ppd.) Basically, both Pelagianism and Arminianism exalt man’s free will over the sovereignty of God; (i.e., returning to the Romish doctrine of both grace and free will).

2. The Greek words translated “for which” or “because” are ἐφ’ ᾧ [contraction for *epi ho*]. The preposition *epi* can have a variety of meanings, but the primary meaning is *on* or *upon*. Furthermore, *for* and *because* are not among its possible meanings.

3. We have available a two-tape study entitled *The Doctrine of Justification*, tapes #178 & 179. \$10 gift.

Feed My Sheep is a part of the teaching ministry of James Bruggeman and is sent out freely upon request. The tithes and gifts of those who are fed by it make it possible for us to continue in ministry. Gifts may be sent to P.O. Box 6388, Asheville, NC 28816.