

Andrews University  
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary  
Department of Discipleship and Religious Education

SABBATH SCHOOL LESSON PLAN:  
REDEMPTION IN ROMANS

A Paper  
Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Course  
DSRE 610 Teaching for Discipleship

By  
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June 23, 2014

# **Sabbath School Quarterly**

*July-September 2010 (No. 461)*

## **Redemption in Romans**

Lesson 4: Justified by Faith (July 17-23, 2010)

### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this Sabbath School lesson study is to:

- Gain greater insight into Romans 3:19-31,
- Understand that Christians are justified by faith and not by works, and
- Experience greater assurance of acceptance before God despite our sins.

### **Desired Learning Outcomes:**

#### **Knowledge**

As a result of this Sabbath School lesson study, participants will:

1. Understand the 3 proper uses and the 1 improper use of the law according to Scripture.
2. Understand that justification is the faith experience by which God provides the sinner His own righteousness in exchange for his/her sins and declares the sinner righteous based on His own merit alone.

#### **Skills and Behaviors**

As a result of this Sabbath School lesson study, participants will:

3. Accept by faith the gift of justification that Jesus freely offers them through His sacrifice.

#### **Attitudes, Values, and Commitments**

As a result of this Sabbath School lesson study, participants will:

4. Experience a sense of camaraderie as we study together on Romans 3:19-31.
5. Feel a sense of awe and gratitude for Jesus' substitutionary sacrifice and His free gift of justification.
6. Experience the assurance of salvation that faith and trust in Jesus' sacrifice brings.

### **Target Audience:**

This Sabbath School lesson study is aimed at participants of an adult Sabbath School group on a Sabbath morning at the Village Seventh-day Adventist Church.

### **Time:**

The Sabbath School lesson study time at the Village Seventh-day Adventist Church lasts for 70 minutes from 10:00am to 11:10am on Sabbath morning.

### **Materials Needed:**

- Sabbath School Room
- Seats for about 15 adults

- Sabbath School Quarterlies (for those who have not obtained one)
- Pencils/Pens
- Paper
- Whiteboard and Dry-erase Markers
- Bibles

**Lesson Plan:**

Learning Strategy	Time	Learning Outcome(s)	Leader Notes
<p><b>Opening Ceremonies</b> Romans 3:28</p>	5 min.	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome everyone to Sabbath School and briefly introduce the topic.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Today we are discussing Justification: What God Does FOR Us.</li> <li>○ Thus we are seeking an answer to the questions, “How do we get right with God?” and “How are we saved?”</li> <li>○ Memory Text: <b>Romans 3:28</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.”</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• Take a few brief prayer requests from the group.</li> <li>• Ask a participant to pray briefly for these requests and for the Holy Spirit’s guidance on the lesson study.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Whiteboard Share:</b> Proper and Improper Uses of the Law 1 Timothy 1:8</p> <p><i>Materials:</i> Whiteboard 3 dry-erase markers Bibles Pencils/Pens Paper “The Four Uses of the Law”</p>	20 min.	1, 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a participant read <b>1 Timothy 1:8</b> out loud.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully.”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Paul notes that the law is good when it is used lawfully/properly. Thus, it appears that the law can also be used unlawfully/improperly.</li> <li>• In theology, we have determined that the Bible presents 4 basic uses of the law: 3 proper ways and 1 improper way to use the law.</li> <li>• Break the participants into 3 groups of 5-6 participants and have them search the Bible together to discover what are these 4 uses of the law. Instruct them to find Scripture verses to support their findings and to</li> </ul>

			<p>identify which uses are proper and which are improper.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Once they have compiled their lists have a participant of each group come to the whiteboard and write their findings on the board. Be sure that they identify which uses are proper and which are improper.</li> <li>• Afterward, discuss the students' findings and provide "The Four Uses of the Law" table for each participant. (see attached handout)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Direct Instruction &amp; Discussion:</b> What is Justification? Romans 3:21-31</p>	15 min.	2, 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide commentary on <b>Romans 3:21-31</b>. (see attached direct instruction)</li> <li>• Ask differing participants to read out loud portions of the passage when prompted.</li> <li>• Encourage participants to ask questions as they arise. Be sure to address and discuss any questions that are raised.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Share-around:</b> Results of Justification</p>	10 min.	2, 4, 5, 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have the participants break up into groups of 3 or 4 participants. Instruct each group to identify and discuss the results of justification. How does it impact their lives in a real way?</li> <li>• Examples may include forgiveness, adoption into the family of God, eternal life, a new beginning, etc.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Illustration &amp; Discussion:</b> Our Debt in the Courtroom</p>	7 min.	2, 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Call the group back together and share an illustration, which demonstrates what Jesus has done for us in justification and how we experience justification. (see attached illustration)</li> <li>• After sharing the illustration ask the participants to discussion the following questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ "How does this make you feel?"</li> <li>○ "What lessons can be drawn concerning justification from this illustration?"</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Be sure that all the lessons mentioned in the illustration are shared.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Conclusion:</b> Assurance of Justification 1 John 5:11-13</p>	5 min.	3, 5, 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage participants to forget trying to earn salvation through obedience to the law but to accept by faith the justification that Jesus freely offers.</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a participant read <b>1 John 5:11-13</b>. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. <u>He who has the Son has life</u>; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you who <u>believe</u> in the name of the Son of God, <u>that you may know that you have eternal life</u>, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Briefly instruct about the assurance that can be ours by trusting in Jesus for our justification emphasizing the underlined portions above.</li> </ul>
<b>Evaluation</b>	3 min.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distribute the evaluation forms.</li> <li>• Ask participants to complete and submit the evaluation forms before leaving.</li> </ul>
<b>Concluding Prayer</b>	5 min.	3, 4, 5, 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have them break into pairs again to pray together about accepting Christ’s gift of justification by faith.</li> <li>• Once the pairs are finished praying conclude with a very brief summary prayer and dismiss the group for worship.</li> </ul>

Total Time: 70 minutes

**Evaluation Form:**

SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; N = Neutral; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree

**Teacher Effectiveness:**

	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
1. The teacher was prepared and organized.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Today's activities contributed to my learning.	1	2	3	4	5

**Learning Outcomes:**

- 3. What is the most important thing you learned from this Sabbath School lesson on justification by faith?

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- 4. How will what you learned about justification impact your personal relationship with Jesus?

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- 5. Share any other feedback you'd like to provide.

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**“The Four Uses of the Law” Handout:**

<b>The Four Uses of the Law</b>	
1 Tim. 1:8	
<i>Lawful Uses</i>	<i>Unlawful Use</i>
<b>1. It points out sin.</b> Rom. 3:19-20; 4:15; 5:13; 7:7-13; 1 John 3:4; Jam. 1:23-25	<b>4. It is a means by which the sinner is justified/earns salvation.</b> Rom. 3:20, 28; Ga. 2:16; 3:11; Eph. 2:8-9
<b>2. It leads us to Christ.</b> Gal. 3:24; Psa. 19:7; Rom. 8:3-4	
<b>3. It is a guide for Christian living.</b> Rom. 2:13; 3:31; 6:15; 13:8-10; Heb. 8:10	

## Direct Instruction: Commentary on Romans 3:21-21

**Romans 3:21-23-** But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”

- The word “righteousness” comes from the Greek word δικαιοσύνη (*dikaiousune*). It is modified by the Greek word θεοῦ (*theou*), which means “of God.” δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ (*dikaiousune theou*), translated here as “the righteousness of God,” functions as a subjective genitive and a possessive genitive, meaning that this righteousness is “a righteousness that comes from God, a righteousness that God provides,” a righteousness that is His very own righteousness, “and the only one that He accepts as true righteousness.” –p. 44 of the Sabbath School Quarterly
  - This is a new righteousness, one that is not developed by the keeping of the law, but one that is accepted and received from Jesus Christ; it is, indeed, His very own righteousness.
  - Verse 22 tells us that this righteousness, the righteousness of Christ, is received by faith, faith in Jesus Christ (objective genitive). In other words, after we have experienced repentance we must believe by faith that God has granted us the promise of His righteousness, the promise of justification. PERIOD! Even if we don’t feel any different or we don’t seem any different, we must believe that fact that we have been justified, denying our feelings, our perceptions, our reason, and our logic. This righteousness comes by faith not by feelings, not by perceptions, not by reason, and not by logic. Faith is the opposite of all of these. I believe this quarterly will go more into this faith later.
    - -“Faith is the condition upon which God has seen fit to promise pardon to sinners; not that there is any virtue in faith whereby salvation is merited, but because faith can lay hold of the merits of Christ, the remedy provided for sin. Faith can present Christ's perfect obedience instead of the sinner's transgression and defection. When the sinner believes that Christ is his personal Saviour, then, according to His unfailing promises, God pardons his sin, and justifies him freely. The repentant soul realizes that his justification comes because Christ, as his substitute and surety, has died for him, is his atonement and righteousness.” –SM, bk. 1, pp. 366-367
  - -“Righteousness is obedience to the law. The law demands righteousness, and this the sinner owes to the law; but he is incapable of rendering it. The only way in which he can attain to righteousness is through faith. By faith he can bring to God the merits of Christ, and the Lord places the obedience of His Son to the sinner’s account. Christ’s righteousness is accepted in place of man’s failure, and God receives, pardons, justifies, the repentant, believing soul, treats him as though he were righteous, and loves him as He loves His Son.” –SM, bk. 1, p. 367

**Romans 3:24-** “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

- The verb “being justified” comes from the Greek verb δικαίωω, which comes from the Greek word, δικαιοσύνη again meaning “righteousness.” δικαίωω, therefore, could be



more correctly translated as “being righteous” instead of “being justified” if it was a real English word. It is important to note that these people who are living by faith are “being righteous” or “being justified” meaning they have righteousness but this righteousness is not their own. According to verse 22 it is “the righteousness of God.” Again this is God’s own righteousness that He provides. –p. 30 of the Sabbath School Quarterly

- Grace is another important word in this verse. It is defined by Ellen White as “unmerited favor.” –SM, bk. 1, p. 331
  - Thus, this verse means that we are justified without any merit on our part. It is only based upon what Jesus has done for us, on behalf of us.
    - “[T]he believer is justified without any merit of his or her own, without any claim to present to God in his or her own behalf except his or her utter helplessness.”
- The word “freely” can lead us to take this righteousness for granted. We view it as always being available, which, in truth, it is, but then we can get lax in our treatment of this righteousness. This may lead us to sin because we know God’s grace is available freely afterwards. Paul says in Romans 6:1, 2, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” The phrase “God forbid” comes from the Greek phrase μή γένοιτο, which is a strong phrase in the optative mood meaning that this is a very doubtful assertion—basically an impossibility. It is farthest removed from reality than any other verb mood. It can be translated as one of the following phrases: “by no means,” “far from it,” “God forbid,” or “may it never be.”
  - -Looking at the word “freely” in the Greek, it comes from the word, δωρεάν, which has a number of different meanings that are all very closely related:
    1. “as a gift,” “without payment,” or “gratis,”
    2. “undeservedly” or “without reason.”
  - How does this change our perspective of this verse?

**Romans 3:25-** “Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.”

- -The word for propitiation is a fancy word that simply means “means of expiation.” Expiation is of course “the means by which atonement is made.” In other words, Jesus is the means by which atonement is made on our behalf; He is our means of salvation.
- -This text uses another fancy word “remission.” The word comes from the Greek word παράσις, which literally means “passing over.” To understand this meaning we must understand that our sins have separated us from God. In order for us to be able to return to God those sins must be cancelled. This verse is essentially saying that Jesus has done this very thing for those who have faith in Him. “The “passing over” is in no sense an ignoring of sins. God can pass over the sins of the past because, by His death, Christ has paid the penalty for all men’s sins. Anyone, therefore, who has “faith in His blood” can have his or her sins remitted.” –p. 48 of the Sabbath School Quarterly

**Romans 3:26-28-** “To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”

- This is what justification is all about. It is Christ declaring the penitent sinner who believes in Jesus by faith, righteous. There can be no boasting for it is a work done completely by Jesus Christ. The only involvement we have in justification is to repent and have faith, which have no merit. Even in these God is intimately involved.

**Romans 3:29-30-** “*Is he* the God of the Jews only? *is he* not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing *it is* one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.”

- Paul is saying here that because all have sinned (Jew and Gentile), all (Jew and Gentile) are in need of salvation. The same God (God of the Jews and the Gentiles) has provided the same salvation for all (Jew and Gentile). All (Jew and Gentile) have to demonstrate the same kind of faith in order to truly experience salvation.

**Romans 3:31-** “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.”

- “Works of law cannot atone for past sins. Justification cannot be earned. It can be received only by faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Therefore, in this sense, works of law have nothing to do with justification. To be justified without works means to be justified without there being anything in ourselves to merit justification. But many Christians have misunderstood and misapplied this text. They say that all one has to do is to believe, while downplaying works or obedience, even obedience to the moral law. In so doing, they completely misread Paul. In the book of Romans, and elsewhere, Paul attaches great importance to the keeping of the moral law. Jesus certainly did, as well, as did James and John (Matt. 19:17; Rom. 2:13; James 2:10, 11; Rev. 14:12). Paul’s point is that, although obedience to the law is not the means of justification, the person who is justified by faith still keeps the law of God and, in fact, is the only one who can keep the law. An unregenerate person who has not been justified can never fulfill the requirements of the law.” –p. 50 of the Sabbath School Quarterly
- The only reason why they are able to keep the law now is because they are now under the Power of Grace and no longer under the Power of Sin.

## **Illustration: Our Debt in the Courtroom**

Imagine a perfect town in which you make exactly \$100.00 a month, every month, no matter how hard or how much you work. In this perfect world your expenses exactly total \$100.00 a month, every month. So you earn \$100.00 and you spend \$100.00 every month. You have no extra money for any kind of extra expenses and no way of earning any extra income. Your income and expenditures match perfectly and exactly every month.

One day, you go to the gas station to purchase the exact amount of gas that you do every month. You go in to pay the cashier and you notice that they have a piece of bubble gum on sale for just \$0.01. You are strongly tempted to purchase the piece of bubble gum and decide to purchase it on credit thinking that you can repay it in the future. So you purchase the piece of bubble gum and you are in debt by \$0.01.

You attempt to pay off your debt by working hard and longer, but you still only make \$100.00 a month and your expenses add up to exactly \$100.00. You earn \$100.00 and you spend \$100.00. The owner of the gas station is getting very angry with you because you haven't paid back your store credit of \$0.01. Finally, you realize that you will never be able to repay the debt and communicate this to the gas station owner.

Upon hearing this, the gas station owner becomes infuriated and takes you to court in order for justice to be served. You plead that your debt is so insignificant, only a penny and that you have managed to acquire no further debt. But in this perfect town any size of unpaid debt is not permitted and is punishable by death. The fact that you hadn't acquired any future debt is of no importance because you are still in debt from the past. Thus, the judge condemns you as guilty and sentences you to death for acquiring debt and being unable to paid it back.

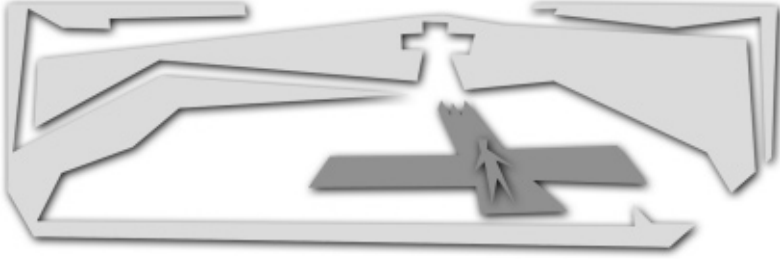
But in walks one of the kindest gentleman from your town who has never acquired any debt. He is completely innocent. To make a long story short, he accepts the penalty that is rightfully yours and gives you the honor and reputation that are rightfully his. As long as you accept this exchange the judge is willing to permit it. You accept the exchange, which results in the gentleman's death and you being honored in your town for being the kindest and most innocent gentleman in town!

How does this make you feel? What lessons can be drawn concerning justification from this illustration?

### **Lessons:**

- Everyone has acquired some size of debt (all of us have sinned).
- No matter what size our debt (how bad our sin) we are still guilty and deserving of death.
- Even if it were possible to stay out of debt in the future (refrain from sin and keep the law perfectly in the future), it cannot repay the debt of our past. Thus, there is no way for us to repay our own previous debt.
- The only answer to escape the inevitable death penalty is to have someone else pay our debt for us by taking our death penalty upon himself.
- In order for the exchange to apply we must accept (by faith) the exchange.

# Justified *by* Faith



SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week’s Study:** *Rom. 3:19–28.*

**Memory Text:** “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (*Romans 3:28*).

In this lesson we come to the basic theme of Romans: justification by faith. The phrase is a figure based on law. The transgressor of the law comes before a judge and is condemned to death for his transgressions. But a substitute appears and takes the transgressor’s crimes upon himself, thus clearing the criminal, who—by accepting the substitute—stands before the judge not only cleared of his guilt but regarded as never having committed the crimes for which he was first brought into court. And that’s because the substitute—who has a perfect record—offers the pardoned criminal his own perfect law-keeping. Thus, the guilty one stands before the judge as having never transgressed.

No one is saying that the person was innocent. On the contrary, his guilt is presumed. The good news is that, despite the guilt, he is pardoned.

In the plan of salvation, each of us is the criminal. The substitute, Jesus, has a perfect record, and He stands in the court in our stead, His righteousness accepted in place of our unrighteousness. Hence, we are justified before God, not because of our works but because of Jesus, whose righteousness becomes ours when we accept it “by faith.” Hence the term “justification by faith.” No matter our past, when we accept Jesus we stand before God in His righteousness, the only righteousness that can save us.

Talk about good news! In fact, the news can’t get any better than that.

*\*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 24.*

## The Deeds of the Law

**Read** Romans 3:19, 20. What is Paul saying here about the law, about what it does and what it does not or cannot do? Why is this point so important for all Christians to understand?

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Paul is using the word *law* in its broad sense as the Jew in his day understood it. By the word *Torah* (the Hebrew word for “law”), a Jew even today thinks particularly of God’s instruction in the first five books of Moses but also more generally in the entire Old Testament. The moral law, plus the amplification of this in the statutes and judgments, as well as the ceremonial precepts, was a part of this instruction. Because of this, we may think of the law here as the system of Judaism.

To be under the law means to be under its jurisdiction. The law, however, reveals a person’s shortcomings and guilt before God. The law cannot remove that guilt; what it can do is lead the sinner to seek a remedy for it.

As we apply the book of Romans in our day, in which Jewish law is no longer a factor, we think of law particularly in terms of the moral law. This law can’t save us any more than the system of Judaism could save the Jews. To save a sinner is not the moral law’s function. Its function is to reveal God’s character and to show people wherein they fall short of reflecting that character.

Whatever law it is—moral, ceremonial, civil, or all combined—the keeping of any or all in and of itself will not make a person just in God’s sight. In fact, the law never was intended to do that. On the contrary, the law was to point out our shortcomings and lead us to Christ.

The law can no more save than can the symptoms of a disease cure the disease. The symptoms don’t cure; they point out the need for the cure. That’s how the law functions.

**How successful have your efforts in law-keeping been? What should that answer tell you about the futility of trying to be saved by keeping the law?**

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## Faith and Righteousness

**“Now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets” (Rom. 3:21). How are we to understand what this text means?**

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This new righteousness is contrasted with the righteousness of the law, which was the righteousness with which the Jew was familiar. The new righteousness is called “the righteousness of God”; that is, a righteousness that comes from God, a righteousness that God provides, and the only one that He accepts as true righteousness.

This is, of course, the righteousness that Jesus wrought out in His life while here in human flesh, a righteousness that He offers to all who will accept it by faith, who will claim it for themselves, not because they deserve it but because they need it.

**“Righteousness is obedience to the law. The law demands righteousness, and this the sinner owes to the law; but he is incapable of rendering it. The only way in which he can attain to righteousness is through faith. By faith he can bring to God the merits of Christ, and the Lord places the obedience of His Son to the sinner’s account. Christ’s righteousness is accepted in place of man’s failure, and God receives, pardons, justifies, the repentant, believing soul, treats him as though he were righteous, and loves him as He loves His Son.”**—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 367. **How can you learn to accept this wonderful truth for yourself?** (See also Rom. 3:22.)

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The faith of Jesus Christ is here, doubtless, faith *in* Jesus Christ. As it operates in the Christian life, faith is much more than intellectual assent; it is more than just an acknowledgment of certain facts about Christ’s life and His death. Instead, true faith in Jesus Christ is accepting Him as Savior, Substitute, Surety, and Lord. It is choosing His way of life. It is trusting Him and seeking by faith to live according to His commandments.

## Grace and Justification

**Keeping** in mind what we have studied so far about the law and what the law cannot do, read Romans 3:24. What is Paul saying here? What does it mean that redemption is in Jesus?

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What is this idea of “justifying,” as found in the text? The Greek word *dikaioo*, translated “justify,” may mean “make righteous,” “declare righteous,” or “consider righteous.” The word is built on the same root as *dikaiosune*, “righteousness,” and the word *dikaionoma*, “righteous requirement.” Hence, there is a close connection between “justification” and “righteousness,” a connection that doesn’t always come through in various translations. We are justified when we are “declared righteous” by God.

Before this justification, a person is unrighteous, and thus unacceptable to God; after justification, he or she is regarded as righteous, and thus acceptable to Him.

And this happens only through God’s grace. *Grace* means “favor.” When a sinner turns to God for salvation, it is an act of grace to consider or declare that person to be righteous. It is unmerited favor, and the believer is justified without any merit of his or her own, without any claim to present to God in his or her own behalf except his or her utter helplessness. The person is justified through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, the redemption that Jesus offers as the sinner’s substitute and surety.

Justification is presented in Romans as a punctiliar act; that is, it happens at a point in time. One moment the sinner is outside, unrighteous, and unaccepted; the next moment, following justification, the person is inside, righteous, and accepted.

The person who is in Christ looks upon justification as a past act, one that took place when he or she surrendered himself or herself fully to Christ. “Being justified” (*Rom. 5:1*) is, literally, “having been justified.”

Of course, if the justified sinner should fall away and then return to Christ, justification would occur again. Also, if reconversion is considered a daily experience, there is a sense in which justification might be considered a repeating experience.

**With the good news of salvation being so good, what holds people back from accepting it? In your own life, what kinds of things cause you to hold back from all that the Lord promises and offers you?**

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## “His Righteousness”

In Romans 3:25, Paul expounds further on the great news of salvation. He uses a fancy word, *propitiation*. The Greek word for it, *hilasterion*, occurs in the New Testament only here and in Hebrews 9:5, where it is translated “mercy-seat.” As used in Romans 3:25, describing the offer of justification and redemption through Christ, *propitiation* seems to represent the fulfillment of all that was typified by the mercy-seat in the Old Testament sanctuary. What this means, then, is that by His sacrificial death, Jesus has been set forth as the means of salvation and is represented as the One providing the propitiation. In short, it means that God did what was needed to save us.

The text also talks about the “remission of sins.” It is our sins that make us unacceptable to God. We can do nothing of ourselves to cancel our sins. But in the plan of redemption, God has provided a way for these sins to be remitted through faith in Christ’s blood.

The word for remission is the Greek *paresis*, literally “passing over” or “passing by.” The “passing over” is in no sense an ignoring of sins. God can pass over the sins of the past because, by His death, Christ has paid the penalty for all people’s sins. Anyone, therefore, who has “faith in His blood” can have his or her sins remitted, for Christ has already died for them (*1 Cor. 15:3*).

### **Read** Romans 3:26, 27. What point is Paul making here?

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The good news that Paul was eager to share with all who would listen was that there was available to humanity “his [that is, God’s] righteousness,” and that it comes to us, not by works, not by our merit, but by faith in Jesus and what He has done for us.

Because of the cross of Calvary, God can declare sinners righteous and still be considered just and fair in the eyes of the universe. Satan can point no accusing finger at God, for Heaven has made the supreme sacrifice. Satan had accused God of asking of the human race more than He was willing to give. The Cross refutes this claim.

**Satan expected God to destroy the world after it sinned; instead, He sent Jesus to save it. What does that tell us about the character of God? How should our knowledge of His character impact how we live? What will you do differently in the next 24 hours directly as a result of knowing what God is like?**



## Faith and Works

**“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (Rom. 3:28). Does this mean that we are not required to obey the law, even if it doesn’t save us? Explain your answer.**

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In the historical context, Paul was speaking in Romans 3:28 of law in its broad sense of the system of Judaism. No matter how conscientiously a Jew tried to live under this system, if he or she failed to accept Jesus as the Messiah, that person could not be justified.

This verse is Paul’s conclusion from his claim that the law of faith excludes boasting. If a man were justified by his own actions, he could boast about it. But when he is justified because Jesus is the object of his faith, then the credit clearly belongs to God, who justified the sinner.

Ellen G. White gives an interesting answer to the question “What is justification by faith?” She wrote, “It is the work of God in laying the glory of man in the dust, and doing for man that which it is not in his power to do for himself.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 456.

Works of law cannot atone for past sins. Justification cannot be earned. It can be received only by faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Therefore, in this sense, works of law have nothing to do with justification. To be justified without works means to be justified without there being anything in ourselves to merit justification.

But many Christians have misunderstood and misapplied this text. They say that all one has to do is to believe, while downplaying works or obedience, even obedience to the moral law. In so doing, they completely misread Paul. In the book of Romans, and elsewhere, Paul attaches great importance to the keeping of the moral law. Jesus certainly did, as well, as did James and John (*Matt. 19:17; Rom. 2:13; James 2:10, 11; Rev. 14:12*). Paul’s point is that, although obedience to the law is not the means of justification, the person who is justified by faith still keeps the law of God and, in fact, is the only one who can keep the law. An unregenerate person who has not been justified can never fulfill the requirements of the law.

**Why is it so easy to get caught in the trap of thinking that because the law doesn’t save us, we need not worry about keeping it? Have you ever rationalized away sin by claiming justification by faith? Why is that a very dangerous position? At the same time, where would we be without the promise of salvation, even when tempted to abuse it?**

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

“Christ’s character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned.”—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 62.

“Grace is unmerited favor. The angels, who know nothing of sin, do not understand what it is to have grace exercised toward them; but our sinfulness calls for the exercise of grace from a merciful God.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 331, 332.

“Faith is the condition upon which God has seen fit to promise pardon to sinners; not that there is any virtue in faith whereby salvation is merited, but because faith can lay hold of the merits of Christ, the remedy provided for sin. Faith can present Christ’s perfect obedience instead of the sinner’s transgression and defection. When the sinner believes that Christ is his personal Savior, then, according to His unailing promises, God pardons his sin, and justifies him freely. The repentant soul realizes that his justification comes because Christ, as his substitute and surety, has died for him, is his atonement and righteousness.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 366, 367.

“Though the law cannot remit the penalty for sin, but charges the sinner with all his debt, Christ has promised abundant pardon to all who repent, and believe in His mercy. The love of God is extended in abundance to the repenting, believing soul. The brand of sin upon the soul can be effaced only through the blood of the atoning Sacrifice . . . of Him who was equal with the Father. The work of Christ—His life, humiliation, death, and intercession for lost man—magnifies the law, and makes it honorable.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 371.

## Discussion Questions:

- 1 Read over the texts for this week and then, in your own words, write a paragraph summarizing what they are saying. Share your paragraphs with each other in class.
- 2 Think about what it cost to save us: the death of the Son of God. What should that tell us about just how bad sin is? After all, if we stopped sinning and never did it again, why would that still not be enough to make us righteous before God? How can these facts help motivate us to resist the temptation to sin?
- 3 What are ways one could be tempted to abuse this wonderful news about salvation by faith alone? What trap is someone falling into who gets caught up in that kind of thinking? (*See 2 Pet. 3:16, 1 John 3:7.*)

## Ryan's Birthday Mission

Like most children, Ryan Wigglesworth from Australia looked forward to his seventh birthday and the party his parents had promised. He would have a birthday cake and play games with his friends. But Ryan wouldn't receive birthday gifts. Instead, it was his family's tradition that he would ask his friends to bring a donation of money for a special mission project.

Ryan's family was planning a mission trip to the island of Vanuatu [van-oo-AH-too] in the South Pacific, and Ryan wanted to use his birthday money to buy books and literature to give to the people there so they could learn more about Jesus.

After his birthday Ryan and his mom went to the Adventist Book Center to buy the books for their trip. The store was having a big sale, so Ryan's money went even farther than he dreamed! "We bought 245 books and Bible study guides and other literature," he says.

Soon the family flew to Vanuatu. They visited a marketplace, where Ryan's mother bought fruits and vegetables while Ryan gave the children some colorful pamphlets about Jesus. Then Ryan met Sope, a man who worked with prisoners. Ryan gave him some Bible study guides to share with the prisoners.

The family held a week of meetings on two different islands. The first day 49 children came after school. The next day they brought their friends, and the attendance grew to 100! Even though the meetings were for children, some adults came to hear the messages of God's love. When Ryan and his brothers and parents gave out literature, they were surprised at how happy people were to receive it.

The family said Goodbye to their new friends and took a boat to the second island. There they held another series of meetings with much the same results. People were amazed that Ryan and his brothers led out in the programs, even though they were children themselves.



Too soon it was time to say Goodbye. Ryan's family agreed that this was the best possible vacation—sharing God's love with people who were eager to learn. "The people were so happy to receive even one piece of literature. That was gift enough for me! I know now that even though I'm just a boy, I can do lots of things for Jesus!"

*Our mission offerings provide literature and training so that people in South Pacific and around the world can hear God's message of love.*