

Justified by Faith (not Works)

The truth that we are justified by faith and not by works not only explains how we enter into a relationship with God; it also informs how we are to live out our relationship with God. It is all by faith. Sometimes, however, a works-mentality can subtly creep back into our thinking. If you find yourself in such a place, the passage that we are considering today can help you “press the reset button” in your relationship with God as it talks about some of the implications of being justified by faith and not by works.

Read Romans 3:27- 4:12

1. What kind of boasting is Paul talking about and why it is excluded (vv. 27-28)?

Steve said:

By definition, when we trust in Jesus we are admitting that we are so sinful that He had to die for our sins. We come to God in humility because we come empty-handed with nothing to offer. This mindset of humility (which is the opposite of boasting) should continue with us throughout our lives. When we understand that we're declared righteous because of our faith, boasting is excluded permanently; we walk in humility. Are you walking in humility these days? Are you generous and gracious to the people with whom you live and work and worship? Humility is the way of life that is compatible with being justified by faith with no reason to boast.

2. Are you walking in humility these days? Are you generous and gracious to the people with whom you live and work and worship? Explain.
3. If you are struggling to walk in humility with those around you, how can recalling that you were declared righteous on the basis of faith help?
4. What is the point of Paul's argument regarding Abraham? What is he seeking to establish through the argument?

Steve said:

When God “justifies the ungodly,” He tells a person, “I am not going to credit your sin to your account; I am going to credit Jesus’ righteousness to your account.” Our relationship with God is founded on His grace; and our relationship with Him is sustained by His grace. And yet it’s not uncommon for believers to think, “I know I was saved ‘by grace through faith,’ but eventually I need to pull my own weight. Surely God expects me to perform.” Do you ever find yourself thinking that? It is true that God expects us to grow up; He wants to be able to have a mature relationship with us. And it is true that our behavior really matters to God. But our standing before Him is never based on works; we never earn the rewards God gives.

5. Do you ever find yourself thinking that God expects you to perform? If so, explain.

6. How does Paul’s use of Abraham demonstrate that our standing before God is never based on works?

Steve said:

Paul’s argument is somewhat complicated, but his point is clear: Since Abraham was justified by faith long before he was circumcised, He is the “father” of all who believe. If the Jews didn’t have an inside track to God, then nobody did. Because we are justified by faith (and not works), everyone who believes has equal access to God. This truth should prompt us to quit thinking that we’re inferior to others spiritually. Sure, other people may have spiritual advantages that you don’t, but if you are justified by faith you are in Christ and you are as close to the heart of God that you can be. You are not a spiritual outsider.

7. Do you really believe that you have equal access to God as everyone else?

8. What is your main point of application from this study?