

The Wednesday Word, October 6, 2021: A Splendid Little Scripture

Romans 4:5, *To him that works not, but believes on Him that justifies (declares not guilty) the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.'*

What a strange yet splendid little verse. It flies in the face of every religious, man-made idea of how to get right with God. It tells us that God justifies the ungodly.

And there's wisdom here for if God exclusively justified the godly, nobody would ever be justified at all.

Our predicament was simple ... we could not save ourselves. The reason for this is that our best efforts were like us ... sinful! But it gets worse. God goes so far as to call our works 'filthy' (Isaiah 64:6). So the reality is that we were lost and without hope. We had neither the ability nor the inclination to save ourselves. But at just the right time (*Ecclesiastes 3:1*), the Lord Jesus came to this earth and performed the only work that could bring us deliverance.

We had earned the death penalty but, in extreme love, the Lord Jesus was executed in our place. There, at Calvary, He offered Himself, the sinless one instead of us, the sinful. And the good news is that the offering was accepted.

Consequently, we are saved not by our works but by His! We are now accepted because of the perfection of His offering. God is just, and yet He's the justifier of those who trust in Jesus (Romans 3:26). You see, God does much more than pardon us, he justifies us,—that is, He declares us not guilty. He pronounces us righteous and treats us as though we had never sinned.

A righteous God must punish sin, so the Lord Jesus took our sin on Himself, and received the punishment due to us, so it is His work that must save, not ours.

What a splendid scripture is this Romans 4:5, "*To him that works not, but believes on him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*" God says what He means, and means what He says. We may try to water down this splendid little scripture and try to get it to mean something less. Indeed, we may even try to add to it, but in spite of our best additions and subtractions, salvation is "to him that worketh not."

"But," says someone, "Surely there is at least one work that needs to be done to gain admission into heaven." Yes, that is true, there is one work necessary to gain access to heaven, and that is the finished work of Christ. His work is satisfactory; hence, our actions are entirely excluded as the ground of our salvation. Our works are all imperfect, faulty and sinful. On the other hand, the finished work of Christ is perfect, complete, infinite, and God is glorified thereby.

Salvation is by grace. Consider this, if a man goes to work, clearly it is not a matter of grace for his employer to pay him. He worked, he was owed, and he was paid. Similarly, if the sinner does some good works in order to be saved, he says God owes him. Grace is ignored and set aside, and the sinner thinks he can take the credit for his own salvation. But the Divine plan is the opposite. The plan is "to him that works not but believes in Jesus." The believer ceases from

his own fleshly, carnal efforts to save himself, but relies on Him that justifies the ungodly." That is why the old hymn says,

Till to Jesus' work you cling
By a simple faith,
"Doing" is a deadly thing—
"Doing" ends in death.
Cast your deadly doing down
Down at Jesus' feet,
Stand in Him and Him alone,
Gloriously complete!

Nothing either great or small—
Nothing, sinner, no;
Jesus did it, did it all,
Long, long ago.

And that's the Gospel Truth!