

GOD'S WAY OF SALVATION

"But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness." Romans 4:5.

Christianity is a religion of grace. The grace principle distinguishes it from all other religious systems in the world. Other religions make demands; Christianity offers a gift. Other religions insist on doing; Christianity speaks of receiving. Other religions outline the works that man must do; Christianity reveals a work which God has done. Basically, there are just two religions:

One of works; the other of faith.

One is human; the other is divine.

One comes out of the muddy stream of humanity; the other comes down out of the heart of God.

One says man must do; the other proclaims God has done.

One calls on man to do his best; the other proclaims God has done His best.

One is the religion of the natural man; the other is the salvation of God.

One sings: "Something in my hands I bring"; the other sings: "Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling."

The man of the world simply cannot conceive of a salvation other than that achieved by his works, but such a salvation is not sponsored by the Bible. It is a striking fact that man prefers the works way to the grace way. Grace tells man that he can do nothing to earn salvation, but that everything has been done for him. No one has ever been saved by anything he did. To trust in one's own works is to repudiate the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that is a serious offense.

In our text we have God's way of salvation set forth in a remarkably clear way.

I. God addresses this passage "to him that worketh not."

In this epistle Paul proves that the whole world is guilty before God, that man has no righteousness of his own, and that he is depraved. The first section of the book is given over to the fact of man's condemnation. Then he tells the same wicked, ungodly, unrighteous men how they may be made just as if they had never sinned--how they may be cleansed from their sin and made righteous before God.

Paul says that salvation from sin, or justification, is "to him that worketh not." The promise of salvation is never given to those who work, regardless of what kind of work may be meant. "Not of works lest any man should boast."

The first thing all sinners must know before they can be saved is that salvation is only available to those who do not work. This being true, those who are depending on their self-righteousness, their good moral life, their charitable spirit, their church membership, their baptism, their good disposition, or upon their attempt to live up to the Golden Rule, and to treat others as they would be treated by others--all such are making a mistake, because God says that it is "to him that worketh not." All forms of human endeavor are excluded so far as salvation is concerned. The Scripture says there is only one way whereby men can be saved and that is God's way. God is telling us here that His offer of salvation is given only to those who do not work for salvation. Salvation does not depend upon our works but upon what Jesus has done. It makes all the difference in the world when one really trusts Him. But you can never experience the joy, the transformation that comes through salvation until you first of all recognize that God's provision for salvation is for those who do not work.

To put salvation on a works basis is to make it impossible for multitudes to be saved. Take, for example, babes who die in infancy; they cannot perform any works. Suppose the thief on the cross had had to trust in works; grace met him in the last hour and said, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." How about people on their death-beds?

It is too late for them to do any works. Thus it is very plain that such a plan of salvation would exclude thousands from the possibility of reaching heaven. Paul clearly stated that salvation is "to him that worketh not."

II. Paul tells us what the requirement for salvation is.

"But believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly." He says rather than working, reforming, or turning over a new leaf; rather than going to church or being baptized, living a good moral life, praying or reading the Bible, rather than any of these things, Paul says, "Here is God's plan of salvation. Here is the way whereby you can be saved." "Believe on Him that justifieth the ungodly." "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." Do you see it clearly? We are saved by God's grace appropriated by our faith. God does not desire that we labor and strive, but that we trust. In Romans 3:24 Paul tells us: "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." That is, we are justified at no cost to us; not on the basis of what we have done or could do, but absolutely without charge. That is because of the love and mercy of God toward us through Christ, though we deserved the very opposite. Salvation is promised to all who will believe on Christ. Some have been church members and have worked hard for years but have never experienced the joy of salvation. The reason is because they have not come according to God's Word. They haven't trusted. They haven't believed. They have only worked. Any man who comes to Christ, apart from works, believing on Him can and will be saved. God justifies ungodly people. Regardless of what your sin or past may have been, salvation is offered to you on the ground of, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. "His faith is counted for righteousness."

What is it that God accepts for righteousness? On what basis does God declare a man righteous? Here it is in our text . . . "his faith is counted for righteousness." Not his church membership, not his baptism, not his works, not his morality, not his living by the Golden Rule, but "his faith is counted for righteousness." Would you be right with God? Then, you must believe. You must have faith in God.

You may have been brought up in a Christian home, in the services of the church, you may be a good moral person, you may have lived an exemplary life in various ways, you may be a member of the church, you may be respected beyond all others in your community, but, if you have not come to the Lord Jesus Christ on the basis of faith, if you have not come as a sinner, trusting Him to forgive you, cleanse you, and save you from your sin, then you are still without God and unsaved. People may respect and admire you, your friends may think you are all right, but the Word of God declares that you are ungodly and unrighteous, that if you die in your present condition you will die without God, without Christ, and go into a world without hope, ending in hell.

I would like to ask this question of everyone who is trying to work his way into heaven: When will you be sure you have done enough to entitle you to get in? Many people are insisting on doing something to save themselves, but never yet have I met one who has been able to tell me: "I have completed the task; I have saved myself." Yet, in spite of the universal uncertainty that characterizes this so-called way of salvation, folks still persist in following it, even in the face of the fact that it can offer no assurance in this life. On the other hand, I have met many who can truthfully say, "I know I am saved, and I have the assurance of salvation in my heart." They are happy and glad and free. Why tinker around with that which is uncertain when God offers something that is certain and sure? To attempt to enter the kingdom of God by your own efforts or works or merits is to rob Jesus Christ of the glory of His Saviourhood. Lay your deadly doing down and cast yourself upon the merits of His saving grace. It will work. Come to the Lord Jesus Christ as a lost and helpless sinner and trust your whole salvation to Him. He justifies ungodly men who come to Him, apart from works, and on the basis of faith. Won't you trust Him without further delay?

"Come, every soul by sin oppressed,
There's mercy with the Lord,
And He will surely give you rest
By trusting in His word.

Only trust Him, only trust Him,
Only trust Him now;
He will save you, He will save you,
He will save you now."