

# DEVOTIONAL

WHEN IN ROME III // JUSTIFIED BY FAITH  
AUGUST 1, 2021

GRACE  
FELLOWSHIP

**Discussion Starter:** Why do you think people feel they must earn or buy salvation?

**Key Text:** “Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. <sup>28</sup> For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. <sup>29</sup> Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, <sup>30</sup> since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. <sup>31</sup> Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.” (Romans 3:27-31)

A Christian missionary in India became friends with a pearl diver. The missionary had tried many times to help his non-Christian friend understand that salvation is a gift from God but so costly that Jesus had to buy it for us. The Hindu refused to believe it—he insisted that we must buy or earn our salvation. One day, the Indian gave the missionary the biggest, most perfect pearl he had ever seen. The man explained that his own son had died while diving to get this pearl from the bottom of the sea. The missionary thanked him and then offered to pay for it. The Hindu man was offended, saying the pearl was priceless—no amount of money could be paid for a pearl that had cost him his dear son’s life. That’s when the Hindu realized why Christians insist that no one can earn or buy salvation. It cost God the life of His beloved Son, Jesus Christ; to think we can pay for it is an offense to God. Salvation is free to us but extremely costly to God.

Throughout his letter to the Romans, Paul emphasizes that salvation is a grace gift from God to us—unearned and undeserved. The key phrase in today’s text is found in verse 28: “[We are] *justified by faith apart from works of the law.*” The idea of *sola fide* (Latin for “faith alone”) is one of the essential truths of Christianity that separates it from all other religions. Isaiah 64:6 says that all our righteous works are like filthy rags. God finds our attempts to earn or even repay Him with works contemptible! Thinking we can make ourselves right with God tarnishes the word grace. “*If it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace*” (Romans 11:6). God wants us to be clear that we are justified by faith, not by any works:

**Discuss:** Why would God find our attempts to earn salvation contemptible?

## 1. Justification by faith erases all boasting.

Paul reasons that since the only way to be made righteous before God is through faith in Christ who fully and completely paid the price for our sins, we have nothing to boast of: “*Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith*” (v.27). The “*law of faith*” overrules the “*law of works*”—salvation is not about any law we can follow in our own strength and therefore be judged by; rather, it is about faith in what God has done for us through Jesus.

**Discuss:** How might a work-based approach to salvation naturally lead to boasting?

## 2. God does not accept what we do for Him; we accept by faith what He did for us.

In verse 28, Paul clarifies that nobody is able to reach the level of being justified by following the works of the law: *“For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.”* We don’t come to God to give; we come to receive. We don’t come to God trying our best; we come trusting His grace. Salvation comes through faith with no contribution or requirement of works (Romans 4:3; 11:6).

**Discuss:** How would you help a person understand that they can’t earn salvation?

## 3. God is one—so He must be the God of the Gentiles as well as the Jews.

*“Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also,<sup>30</sup> since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith”* (v.29-30).

God is the only God, and all people must answer to Him. Therefore, it makes sense that God’s perfect, ultimate, righteous judgment would carry the same standards for all people—Jews and Gentiles alike. Anyone who comes to Him in faith will be justified by God, whether they follow the Jewish religion or have never even heard of the Jewish religion. God is not the God of the Jews only.

**Discuss:** See if you can come up with at least five reasons for why a grace-based salvation (such as is offered in Christianity) is superior to a works-based religion (such as is offered by all non-Christian religions).

## 4. Even though justification is by faith, don’t throw out the law—it anticipated the coming of grace.

*“Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law”* (v.31).

Romans 3 concludes with Paul anticipating that some Jews may accuse him of being against God’s law: *“Do we then overthrow the law by this faith?”* (v.31) or *“Doesn’t faith, then, void the law; and if so, what good is the law—shouldn’t we just throw it out?”* Paul responds that even though salvation is by grace and not the law, we don’t get rid of the law. As he will show in Romans 4, the law anticipated the coming gospel of justification by faith, apart from obeying the law. Thus, the gospel of salvation by grace through faith actually establishes the law, fulfilling its predictions.

**Discuss:** Read John 1:17. In what sense do we need Moses (the law) in order to get to Jesus (grace)?

### For Further Study:

“What Was the Purpose of the Levitical Law?” article at [www.gotquestions.org](http://www.gotquestions.org)

*The End of the Law: Mosaic Covenant in Pauline Theology* by Jason Meyer

*How Good is Good Enough?* by Andy Stanley

“Can All Religions Be True?” article at [www.seanmcdowell.org](http://www.seanmcdowell.org)