**LESSON ELEVEN - Justification**

**Introduction:**

**Look over the first page of this lesson (p. 101) and discuss:**

This lesson looks at how we can counter the varying views and philosophies our culture holds about life, death and eternity. What is the truth?

We look to Scripture as our sole authority in all matters of life and faith. The Bible, as God's Word to us, gives us a set of absolutes by which to understand our faith and live our lives. On the issue of salvation, Christians are often accused of being closed-minded:

"How can you say you are right and all other religions are wrong?"

Some religions are more tolerant of each other; some even seek to find common ground for "dialogue" in order to move towards unity -

Roots of the word ‘tolerance’ in the Eastern religions is "there are many paths to God"

Christians claim that we alone have the truth regarding salvation - Jesus Christ is the only way to be saved:

*“ Salvation can be found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved”* (Acts 4:12). This radical (outrageous?) claim is a stumbling block to many.

A question most often asked is: "But what about all the Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, sects (Jehovah’s Witness, Mormon, etc) who are sincere in their attempts to find God? Won't God honour their sincerity?"

Jesus is the one who said He was the only way to be reconciled with God – it is not my opinion, or yours or the church’s that counts, but what *Jesus* says:

* **John 14:6**: *Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.****7****If you really know me, you will know****[***[***b***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+14&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26676b)***]****my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”*
* **John 11:25**: *Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die;****26****and whoever lives by believing in me will never die.*
* Peter is also clear (we can assume he heard it from Jesus): [**Acts 4:12**](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+4:12&version=NIV)**: *“****Salvation is found in****no****one else, for there is****no******other******name****under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”*
* In **Rom 10:1-9:** Paul is unequivocal: *“If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”*

All through the New Testament the message is the same – John proclaims it most clearly in his Gospel, and refutes those who would teach something different in his 1st letter. **Read 1 John 1:1-4; 4: 13-16; 5:1, 10-13.**

So what of those who sincerely believe what other religions teach? I can be sincere, believe something with all my mind and heart, and still be wrong. I can sincerely believe if I stand in the middle of the road and a semi (lorry) is coming that I won't be killed. My sincerity won't change reality. Jesus declared he is the only way to be save, the only source of eternal life.

Most people believe at some level that it is unfair of God to not accept those who sincerely try to please God (live a good life) . "If I really try hard a loving God won't condemn me."

In fact, it is not unfair – it is incredibly merciful of God to save any of us! We deserve eternal separation from God (hell).

Lays the foundation for understanding what God has done through Christ’s death in making us righteous - **Justification**

1. **The Need for a Saviour:**

**1. Our need for justification** is outlined in Romans chapters 1-3

1. Those who don't have the whole law still have some knowledge of God, but most fail to worship Him **(Read Rom 1:18-25).**

**Example:** In the book Bruchko, missionary Bruce Olson tells of a South American tribesman whom he found digging a deep hole in the jungle, and wailing as he did so. He was looking for God. A legend had been down through generations, that told of their ancestors making God angry and so he left them on their own. This man was trying to find him in the heart of the earth. There is something that point the way to Jesus embedded in every religion – God’ mercy and grace. Don Richardson calls it “a redemptive analogy.” In this tribe, the legend also said that someone would come with a banana stalk that would show the way back to God.

Banana stalk split looks like the pages of a book – Bruce was the fulfillment, bringing his bible, helping them find God.

1. Those who know the law and have had all the special privileges that go with it are guilty too if they have failed to keep the law (Rom 2:17-29). And who can keep the Law?
2. Conclusion: Rom 3:10-18,23 – “No one is righteous”

* Two different meanings of “righteousness:”

**The world's:** conformity to the ethical norm as established by the community, or group consensus. Relative (pornography issue)

**God's**: found in Scripture, absolute, based on God's righteousness, His unchanging character. We can only understand righteousness if we look at God.

* We don't recognize the seriousness of our sin. Sin is against God - *we* are against God, His enemies. *Therefore* in one sense God is against us. Rom 1:18 - *"The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men."*

Do we see it that way? Or do we see our sin as a mistake or maladjustment, or misfortune, something we couldn’t really help because… ? Only when the image of God actually recoiling from us because of our sin sinks are we able to appreciate fully what God has done in jutifying us. Realising our sin has not just damaged another, but is against God leads us to repent.

**2. Meaning of justification** – rooted in “justice,” which is acquitting the innocent and condemning the guilty. **Justification: just as if I’d never sinned.** That is how God now sees us, our relationship (harmony) is restored.

* **Definition:** Actually a legal term, gives the image of God seated at the judge's bench - that legal act of God by which He declares the sinner righteous on the basis of the perfect righteousnes of Christ. ..*”God’s wonderful grace rules…giving us right standing with God.”(Rom 5:19b)*
* It affects the *status* of the sinner. God has so perfectly met his own demands in Christ, that **when you are *in* Christ you are justified.”**

**3. Nature of justification contrasted with sanctification**

1. **Justification:** removes the *guilt* of sin and God sees us as righteous because of our faith in Christ (Rom 3:22-25a). restores to us all the rights of a child of God (eternal inheritance, sonship, etc.), restores our relationship with God. Immediate, complete.

**Sanctification** removes the *pollution* of sin and renews the sinner in conformity with the image of God.

1. **Justification** takes place outside of the sinner in God's courthouse, though it is appropriated by faith.

**Sanctification** takes place in the inner life of man and gradually affects his whole being.

1. **Justification** takes place once and for all,

**Sanctification** is a continuous process which is not ever completed in this life.

Both are effects of Christ's work on the cross, with Justification ascribed more frequently to the Father, and Sanctification to the Holy Spirit.

**4. Elements of Justification**

* Forgiveness of sin on the basis of the righteousness (obedience, sinlessness) of Jesus Christ, now credited to us through our faith in Him. Applies to all sins past, present and future, therefore includes removal of all guilt and every penalty (Rom 5:19, 8:1, Heb 10:14).
* Adoption as children - God adopts us, places us in the position of children with all the rights of children, in the legal sense – we are heirs (**Rom 8:15-17**; Gal 4:5-7)
* We have worth, not because we have made ourselves worthy, but because God has declared us worthy through Christ – worth dying for **(Rom 5:1-11)**
* We gain eternal life: We are heirs of all the blessings of salvation in this life and the one to come. Receive title to an inheritance "incorruptible and undefiled and that fades not away." **(1 Pet 1:3-5)**
* Justification is the pure gift of God (Gal. 2:16, Eph. 2:8, Rom 3:24), not a reward for anything in us, not of works, not even a result of our faith. Faith is the instrument of justification, not the means - pure grace.

5. **Things that do not justify us** - we have sought righteousness through:

1. **Knowledge**, **human wisdom** – (**1 Cor. 1:18-25)**. Belief that education will be our salvation. If people are educated they will do what is right. “Our knowledge has surpassed our ethics; we have the knowledge to do incredible things, but no wisdom to guide us.” (Einstien)
2. **Works of the law and morality:** these are the basis of salvation in every other religion. Grace is one thing that makes Christianity unique. Paul speaks to the value of our own righteousness (Phil. 3:4-9, Rom. 9:30-33). You can choose if you wish to stand before God with your own righteousness or Christ's.
3. **Idealism and Noble intentions:** People who decide to live by their own standards do one of two things - they either lower their standards or confess their inability to live up to them.

Even as Christians we struggle with living a godly life. Paul's struggle is documented in Rom. 7:18-23. Remember how God sees you **(Col 1:22-23)**. Our future is secure in Jesus Christ and his sacrifice. **Rom 5:1** "Having been justified we now have peace with God."

1. **Self-effort:** there is no favour earned through self-improvement courses, seeking self-actualization, or any other human endeavor.

**These all have value, but none are able to bridge the gap between us and God.** Only the cross is able to do that. Thanks be to God!!

**Paul’s Apology: Romans**

Romans stands as the crown of Paul's letters. It is the fullest, most closely reasoned statement we have of the basic Christian truths.

To see breakdown of Romans in the light of the doctrine of Justification:

* Paul describes state of the world (Ch.1:18-32). Every one of us stands condemned by God's standards.
* Even the Jew who has the unique privilege of knowing the law (Ch 2-3:20).
* But God offers us free pardon and new life - Jesus has served our sentence for us (Ch. 4-5).
* Abraham illustrated the salvation by faith principle in the OT.
* We are free to make a fresh start, this time with all God's power at our disposal (Ch. 6-8).
* Why then do Gentiles accept God's offer of salvation and the Jews reject it? Because Jews see salvation in terms of works. They too will come in (Ch. 9-11).
* God's love and forgiveness spur us on to live out our lives according to his laws written on our hearts, to permeate every aspect of our daily living and relationships (Ch.12-15)