



I AM THE LORD THY GOD
THOU SHALT HAVE NO
OTHER GODS BEFORE ME
THOU SHALT NOT MAKE UNTO
THEE ANY GRAVEN IMAGE
THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE
NAME OF THE LORD THY
GOD IN VAIN
REMEMBER THE SABBATH
DAY TO KEEP IT HOLY

HONOUR THY FATHER AND
THY MOTHER
THOU SHALT NOT KILL
THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT
ADULTERY
THOU SHALT NOT STEAL
THOU SHALT NOT BEAR
FALSE WITNESS
THOU SHALT NOT COVET

Are We Justified by the Law of Moses?

**“We reckon therefore that a man is justified by faith apart
from the works of the law”**

(Romans 3:28)

Willie A. Alvarenga

ARE WE JUSTIFIED BY THE LAW OF MOSES?

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Introduction:

1. The question under consideration is one that has been asked for centuries.
2. Sadly to say, there are many who still have not understood the biblical answer to this very important question.
 - a. This has been the case with some of our brethren, as well as denominations around the world.
3. It is the purpose of this lesson to discuss vital information pertaining to the correct answer to the question under consideration.
4. In this lesson I would like to discuss the following points:
 - a. The context of the book of Romans in relation to the Law of Moses and the doctrine of justification.
 - b. Reasons why the Law of Moses cannot justify men.
 - c. The serious consequences of trying to seek justification through the Law of Moses.
 - d. Finally, the location and manner of justification.
5. As I present this lesson, let me encourage each of you to please carefully consider the following passages: Acts 17:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:21 & 1 John 4:1.
 - a. Let me remind you that we can understand God's Word in relation to the matter under discussion (cf. John 7:17; Ephesians 3:4).

6. Also let me encourage you to please make plans to practice those things we need to do in order to please our heavenly Father (cf. James 1:22; John 14:15).
7. Therefore, having considered these things, let us examine the evidence that proves that we are not justified through the Law of Moses.

I. THE CONTEXT OF THE BOOK OF ROMANS IN RELATION TO THE LAW OF MOSES AND THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION.

A. *What is the central theme of the book of Romans?*

1. A diligent study of this book will reveal that the central theme of Romans is: **The Gospel is God's Power to the salvation of men.**
2. Also, we can rightly conclude that the book of Romans stresses the doctrine that justification is obtained by means of an obedient faith in Christ (cf. Romans 1:5; 16:26; 3:23).

B. *Paul, in the book of Romans, as well as in Galatians, dealt with the problem of justification through the works of the Law of Moses.*

1. There were some Jews in the first century who believed and taught that man is justified by keeping the Law of Moses (cf. Acts 15).
2. Paul very succinctly taught that justification came only by an obedient faith in Christ. Several passages will be cited later on to prove this point.

C. *Let us consider a brief overview of the first 7 chapters of Romans:*

1. **In chapter one** Paul establishes the fact that Gentiles are lost in sin and stand in need of justification (esp. vss. 18-32).
2. **In chapter two** he establishes that Jews are lost in sin and stand in need of justification.

3. ***In chapter three*** Paul establishes that Gentiles and Jews are lost in sin and need to be justified of their sins through faith in Jesus Christ.
 4. ***In chapter four*** the apostle presents a powerful argument (Abraham) to refute to the Jews that justification is obtained by an obedient faith and not by the works of the Law of Moses.
 5. ***In chapter five*** as well as chapter 8, the apostle teaches about the great blessings those who are in Christ enjoy, because they have obeyed the gospel of Christ.
 6. ***In chapter six*** Paul speaks about the reality of the sin problem and how the grace of God, which those who have obeyed the gospel enjoy, is able to help them overcome sin.
 7. ***In chapter seven*** the apostle teaches about how we are no longer living under the old law, but the Law of Christ.
 8. ***In summary***, the entire letter to the Romans, as well as Galatians, teaches that salvation, justification, and redemption come through an obedient faith in Christ, and not through the works of the law of Moses.
- D. Let me encourage each of us to carefully study these two great letters. Do not be intimidated by those who teach that Romans cannot be understood. God has given us His Word, and such CAN be understood (cf. Ephesians 3:4).

II. REASONS WHY THE LAW OF MOSES CANNOT JUSTIFY MEN.

- A. Let us consider a few reasons why the law of Moses cannot justify man:
1. ***Reason # 1: The apostles' doctrine clearly taught that man cannot be justified through the Law of Moses.***
 - a. Paul established this point when he was preaching at Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:39).

- b. Paul also made the same argument when he wrote to the saints at Rome (cf. Romans 3:20, 28), and when he rebuked Peter (cf. Galatians 2:16).
- c. The apostle Peter also made this point at the Jerusalem council. Please read Acts 15:8-11 concerning this point.

2. Reason # 2: *Men today are not under the law of Moses, but the Law of Christ.*

- a. A change of law was prophesied under the Old Testament (cf. Jeremiah 31:31-34).
- b. In the Old Testament Moses said that we would listen to a new Prophet that was to come, Jesus Christ (Deuteronomy 18:15-18; cf. Acts 3:22-26).
- c. God himself taught us that we needed to listen to Jesus (cf. Matthew 17:5), not Elijah or Moses. This, obviously, does not mean that we do not appreciate the work these two men did in the Old Testament.
- d. The truth that we no longer live under the Old Testament law was emphasized by the apostle Paul (cf. Romans 7:1-6; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 2:13-16; Colossians 2:14 and Hebrews 8:7-13).
- e. Jesus himself also made the argument that we are under His New Law, not the law of Moses (cf. Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28, 33-34, 38-39; 23:23).
- f. Justification cannot be obtained through the Law of Moses but only through Jesus Christ (cf. Galatians 2:16).
- g. Notice what Brother Wayne Jackson commented concerning this point under consideration, "This 'justification' status, Paul says, cannot be achieved by means of the Mosaic law. And

why not? Because the Old Testament had only the offerings of animals, which could never, on an ultimate basis, remedy sin (Heb. 10:1-4). If salvation could have been accessed, strictly on the basis of Moses' law, then Jesus died needlessly (Gal. 2:21). Christ had to function as the Lamb of God for the potential benefit of humanity in every historical period (Gal. 4:4; Heb. 9:15).¹

3. As we can see, there is plenty of evidence that proves we are not under the Law of Moses, but under the Law of Christ.

4. *Notice what Brother Alan E. Highers commented about the difference between the Old and the New Testament:*

a. "There is a difference between the law and the gospel. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16), but those who would be justified by the law are fallen from grace (Gal. 5:4). Therefore, the animal sacrifices, Sabbath observance, instrumental music and other practices under the law do not constitute the pattern for us today"²

5. Sadly to say, there are many who still believe that they are obligated to keep the Law of Moses. The internal evidence from Scripture we have considered clearly teaches that this cannot be the case.

B. Let us keep in mind that we must rightly divide the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).

¹ Jackson, Wayne, *The Acts of the Apostles from Jerusalem to Rome*, 2nd Ed. (Stockton, California: Christian Courier Publications, p. 158-159

² Alan E. Highers, *The New Testament is the Pattern for Men Today*, p. 296 (*Rightly Dividing the Word: Volume I—General Hermeneutics, The Fourth Annual Shenandoah Lectures*, editor Terry M. Hightower, 1990

III. THE SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES OF SEEKING JUSTIFICATION THROUGH THE LAW OF MOSES.

A. **What are the terrible consequences of seeking justification through the law of Moses?** Let us consider the teaching of the Bible as we seek to answer this question:

1. ***Consequence # 1: You are guilty of teaching something that goes contrary to the Word of God.***

- a. The Bible nowhere teaches that justification comes through the law of Moses.
- b. We have a great responsibility of teaching only that which God authorizes in His Word (cf. 1 Peter 4:11; Titus 2:1; Colossians 3:17).
 - i. To teach something the Bible does not teach is to be guilty of perverting the Scriptures. This is exactly what some Jews were doing! An anathema awaits those who pervert the gospel of Christ (see Galatians 1:6-9).
- c. Let us not be guilty of teaching false doctrine!

2. ***Consequence # 2: You would have committed spiritual adultery.***

- a. The Bible teaches that if you try to keep the law of Moses, you are guilty of spiritual adultery (cf. Romans 7). Paul argued that we are married to Christ, and not to Moses (vs. 4).
- b. Spiritual adultery takes place when we forsake God to go after others things that go contrary to His will (cf. James 4:4).

3. ***Consequence # 3: Christ would have died in vain if justification comes through the law of Moses.***

- a. This is what you and I would be teaching if we argued that justification is through the Law of Moses and not through Christ's Law.
- b. This is the argument that Paul conveyed to the Galatians (cf. Galatians 2:20-21).
- c. Christ's death had the purpose of establishing a New Covenant so that man can be justified through His Law, and not the Law of Moses. To say that man can obtain justification through the Law of Moses is to say that what Christ did on the cross was in vain. This certainly cannot be the case.

4. Consequence #4: Man would have to keep the whole law of Moses.

- a. This is what Paul conveyed to the Galatians:
- b. "For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse: for it is written, **cursed is every one who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them**" (Galatians 3:10, emp. added).

5. Consequence # 5: Salvation is lost.

- a. There is no salvation whatsoever to those who are trying to be justified through the law of Moses:
- b. "Ye are severed from Christ, ye who would be justified by the law; **ye are fallen away from grace** (Galatians 5:4, emp. added).
- c. *Notice what B.W. Johnson* said concerning this point in his People's New Testament Explanatory Notes, "Their circumcision, under the circumstances, would be the sign of their submission to the law of Moses. They, Gentile Christians,

could not thus become Jews and remain Christians. It would be a proof of trust in Moses rather than Christ, in the law rather than in the gospel” (p. 179).

- d. You can be the best person in the entire world, but if you seek to be justified through the Law of Moses, you have lost everything.

B. Friends, these are serious and terrible consequences that come our way when we try to seek justification through the Law of Moses; the Bible is clear on this point. Let us listen to God, and do what He says, not what we think!

IV. THE LOCATION AND MANNER OF TRUE JUSTIFICATION.

A. Let us consider what the Bible teaches in regards to where justification of our sins is found, and the manner by which such is obtained.

B. Let us consider where justification of our sins is found:

1. “**And by him** every one that believeth is justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the Law of Moses” (Acts 13:39, emp. added).
2. “**In whom** we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace” (Ephesians 1:7, emp. added).
3. “yet knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law **but through faith in Jesus Christ**, even we believed on Christ Jesus that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law: because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Galatians 2:16, emp. added).

4. “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption **that is in Christ Jesus**” (Romans 3:24, emp. added).
 5. “Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with **God through our Lord Jesus Christ; through whom** also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand; and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:1-2, emp. added).
 6. “On the morrow he seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, **behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!**” (John 1:29, emp. added).
 7. “**Who gave himself for our sins**, that he might deliver us out of this present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father” (Galatians 1:4, emp. added).
 8. “My little children, these things write I unto you that ye may not sin. And if any man sin, **we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins;** and not for ours only, but also for the whole world” (1 John 2:1-2, emp. added).
 9. “**Knowing that ye were redeemed**, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; **but with the precious blood**, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, **even the blood of Christ:** who was foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world, but was manifested at the end of the times for your sake” (1 Peter 1:18-20, emp. added).
- C. As we can see, there is no doubt in our minds that the location for our justification is found in Christ Jesus.
- a. This is the location where all the spiritual blessings are found (Ephesians 1:3).

D. Now, let us now consider the manner by which justification is obtained:

1. Man must be where all the spiritual blessings are.
2. **How can man enter into the blessing of justification?** Judaizing teachers said: man must obey the gospel, be circumcised, and keep the Law of Moses (cf. Acts 15:1-5). God says...
 - a. Man must hear the gospel of Christ (cf. Romans 10:17; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Romans 1:16).
 - b. Man must believe in the Son of God (Mark 16:16; John 3:16). Must have an obedient faith.
 - c. Man must repent of his sins (Acts 2:38; 17:30).
 - d. Man must confess Christ as the Son of God (Acts 8:37; Romans 10:9-10).
 - e. Man must be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16).
 - f. Man must live a faithful life in Christ (Philippians 2:12; cf. Revelation 2:10).
3. **When the person is baptized...**
 - a. He is baptized into Christ Jesus (cf. Romans 6:4; Galatians 3:27).
 - b. Let us remember that **“in Christ”** is where we find justification (cf. Romans 3:24; Ephesians 1:7), reconciliation (cf. Ephesians 2:13-16), eternal life (cf. 1 John 5:11; John 11:25), and many more blessings (cf. Ephesians 1:3).
4. We hope and pray that many will come to the knowledge of the truth concerning how justification is obtained. It is our fervent prayer that you, who have not obeyed the gospel of Christ yet, will do it today.

Conclusion:

1. Are we justified by the works of the law? The answer is an emphatic NO according to the scriptural evidence that has been submitted in this lesson.
2. We hope and pray that people will reason correctly about this matter of great importance.
3. May the Lord help us as we continue to teach people to rightly divide His Word of truth (cf. 2 Timothy 2:15).
4. May we always appreciate the great blessing of justification that we are able to obtain through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!



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