

Justification by the Holy Spirit

The theology that we prefer concerning justification or righteousness by faith, or by works, remains purely academic, and will not justify us, without ultimately being justified by the Holy Spirit. The heart is where justification resides. The human mind alone cannot receive it. This is true even if the knowledge is entirely from the Bible, “for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life”^[1]. The words ‘justification’ and ‘righteousness’ are interchangeable. They are both translated from the same Greek word.

The teaching begins in the Old Testament:

“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.”^[2]

“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.”^[3]

Paul explains what this means when he says:

“Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but

in fleshy tables of the heart. And such trust have we through Christ toward God; Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.”^[4]

God’s law is in the inward part of our heart when His Spirit is within us and we are led by the Spirit.^[5] We become living epistles when the Spirit of Christ is within us. We are not able to be living epistles without Him. Anyone can quote Scripture; but not everyone is a living book.

We are not able to live righteous lives without the Spirit because as long as we remain slaves to sin, we are not righteous before God.^[6] The Spirit frees us from slavery to sin by its fruit that is produced in us.^[7]

The new covenant is of the Spirit who brings us life and righteousness. The old covenant of the letter could not do this. Only grace that flows into us through the Spirit can free us from the slavery of sin.^[8] The Bible is essential because it instructs us on how to arrive at righteousness; but ultimately we have to draw close to God in order for it to happen.^[9]

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[1] 2Corinthians 3:6

[2] Jeremiah 31:31-33

[3] Ezekiel 36:26-27

[4] 2Corinthians 3:2-9

[5] Cf. Galatians 5:18

[6] Cf. Romans 6:20

[7] Cf. Galatians 5:22-23

[8] Cf. Romans 6:14

[9] Cf. James 1:25; 4:8-10; 1Peter 5:5-7; 2Peter 1:1-8; Romans 6:13-19; Philippians 4:6-7; Proverbs 3:5-6; Matthew 6:25-34, 11:28-30; Psalms 37:7, 55:22; Isaiah 26:3-4, 30:15, 55:6-9; John 6:63; Galatians 5:16-26