

Edited by
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Justification

Page 2

ADVENTURES IN ACTS

Introduction

Page 4

The Writing on the Wall

Page 6

Come, Take, Learn and Find

Page 8

Editor's Introduction

Hopefully you are enjoying your summer, and will receive this issue of the magazine in time to read it on holiday. It is important to read and develop our minds. One of our articles in this issue is about 'justification'. Please don't ignore it as a heavy topic, have a read, and let me know what you think! We continue our walk through the first half of Daniel with Paul McCauley; interesting reading. This issue sees the start of another series – 'Adventures in Acts'. I am looking forward to this one; I hope that you are too.

I'll leave you to get on with your reading. Keep in touch through Facebook, or write to us, the address is in the main magazine. I am praying that you will continue to 'grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ'.

In the Saviour's name,

Stephen Baker



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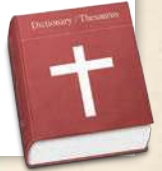
YOUNG PRECIOUS SEED is a supplement of *Precious Seed International* designed for those young in faith. Its purpose is to restate timeless truths from the word of God for a new generation of Christians and to kindle a biblical approach to current issues in the world in which we live. YPS is published by *Precious Seed*, Pitcot Farm, Pitcot Lane, Stratton-on-the-Fosse, Radstock BA3 4SX, UK, and is available separately from the main magazine.

Justification

BY ANDREW DUTTON LIVERPOOL, ENGLAND

Definition of justification

When we are justified, we are 'declared right' in God's sight. There is no guilt for sin, and no accusation can be made. As a result, we do not deserve to be punished.



What the Lord Jesus says about justification

In Luke chapter 18, the Lord Jesus tells the story of two men praying in the temple. The Pharisee was full of pride and arrogance; he prayed about himself, to benefit himself. His prayer didn't reach God. The Tax Collector cried out in humility, 'God be merciful to me a sinner', v. 13. The Lord Jesus concludes the parable by stating that the Tax Collector 'went down to his house justified rather than the other', v. 14.

What was it that caused the Tax Collector to be justified?

1. He knew what he was – a shameful sinner before God;
2. He appreciated the holiness of God – he stood 'afar off' in the sinner's place;
3. He realized that he needed God's forgiveness and genuinely cried out for mercy – he approached God in the right way [extra note: the English word 'merciful' comes from a Greek word that also means 'to atone for sin' and 'propitious', therefore the man had sacrifice in his mind, when asking for forgiveness].

Justification in Romans

God is just; simply put, God is right! The early chapters of Romans indicate that mankind is the opposite - wrong! 'There is none righteous', 3. 10. The whole world is guilty before God; the anger of God is inevitable. But, later in chapter 3, Paul introduces God's unique remedy, the death and blood of the Lord Jesus. This is available to all 'through faith in His blood', 3. 25. There are three aspects of justification in Romans:

1. Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, Rom. 3. 24.

Justification can't be earned. Instead, it is received on the basis of God's free favour shown towards undeserving and rebellious sinners. God's love is the source, 5. 8, in desiring that sinners should be cleared of any charge, at peace with Himself. 'Redemption' reminds us of the great price paid by the Lord Jesus at Calvary. Because of this, God can righteously act in grace towards us, as justice has been done.

2. Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ 5. 1.

The tense of the statement 'being justified' refers to something that happened in the past; it's the point when I personally

exercised faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for forgiveness of sins. The point when I was saved! Faith is complete trust in Lord Jesus and all that He has achieved at the cross; resting in Him alone to save me.

Peace is a great concept; F E STALLAN wrote that it 'describes security, serenity, welfare and right relationships' – this is all ours through the Lord Jesus.

3. Being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him 5. 9.

The blood shed means a life has been given. The principle of sacrifice is 'without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins', (Heb. 9. 22 ESV). The Lord Jesus 'offered one sacrifice for sins for ever', 10. 12. This is the price that was paid. How great the cost! But the result is also great – it was fully acceptable to God; we see this in the Lord's resurrection, 'Who . . . was raised again for our justification', Rom. 4. 25.

The result of our justification is that we will be 'saved from wrath'. The judgment of God which will ultimately come upon sinners is not for us.

received, full of joy since he had peace with God. We can do the same! Further, we can appreciate something of the amazing price the Lord Jesus paid, for us to be 'declared right'.

More study...

PHIL COULSON, *Great Truths of the Bible*, John Ritchie Ltd, – an invaluable overview of justification and other great gospel truths.

F E STALLAN, *What the Bible Teaches – Romans* John Ritchie Ltd – a verse by verse commentary of Romans to aid a deeper study, especially chapters 3, 4 and 5 relating to justification

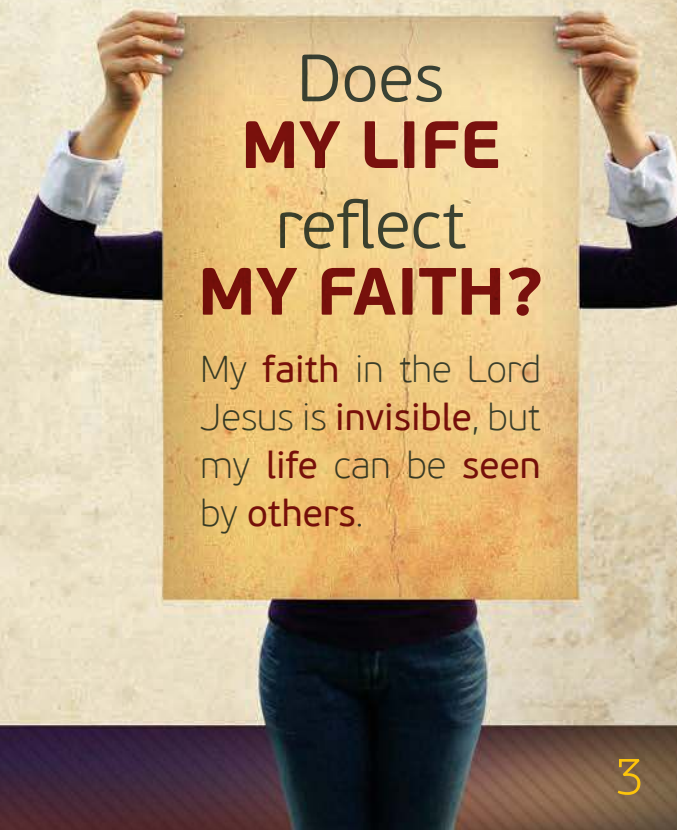
ALBERT LECKIE, *Romans a Commentary on chapters 1-8* Precious Seed Publications – a very clear and helpful commentary recently compiled from recordings of Mr Leckie's ministry.

J I PACKER – *18 Words – The Most Important Words You Will Ever Know – 'Justification'* (p.135-142) – an excellent book for young and older believers.

Living out Justification

James says, 'faith without works is dead', 2 .26). He gives Old Testament examples of people who were 'justified by works', vv. 21, 25. This does not mean that they worked to obtain justification, but their belief and faith in God was shown in their lifestyle. My faith in the Lord Jesus is invisible, but my life can be seen by others. This is the challenge of justification – I stand before God 'declared right', but does my life match up?

So, back to the Tax Collector of Luke chapter 18. He went home 'justified'. No doubt he was thankful to God for the forgiveness he had





ADVENTURES IN ACTS:

Introduction

BY JEREMY SINGER BRIDGE OF WEIR, SCOTLAND

Acts is a thoroughly exciting Bible book, with a fast-moving narrative as it documents the first years of the church. J. B. PHILLIPS refers to Acts as 'The Young Church in Action'. This article gives a short introduction to the book, with the aims of (1) motivating you to read it, and (2) providing background for future YPS articles studying specific sections in the book over the next few issues.

General Background

When we begin looking at any Bible book, there are generally three key points to address: author, purpose, and structure.

01 AUTHOR:

Luke, the 'beloved doctor', Col. 4. 14 NLT, is the writer of Acts. This is his second volume in the New Testament, following on from his Gospel record. In Luke's Gospel, he describes 'all that Jesus began to do and teach,' Acts 1. 1 NASB. In the Acts, he describes what Jesus did next, as the Holy Spirit empowered the Christians to serve their Lord. Luke interviews eyewitnesses, and collates their accounts, Luke 1. 2-3. In fact, he travels with Paul on some of the missionary journeys; note the seamless transition to first person narrative, e.g., in chapter 16. Throughout, we notice Luke's careful attention to detail, which is a good lesson for us to learn in any spiritual service.

02 PURPOSE:

Why did Luke compile his historical accounts? He gives the answer at the start of his writings - it is so that Theophilus (and by implication, all Luke's readers) may have confidence in the things they have heard, Luke 1. 4. Given Luke's meticulous accounts, we can historically correlate many of the places, people, and events he describes. This gives us a firm and defensible foundation for our faith and practice. Christianity is firmly anchored in history, we can be sure of that.

03 STRUCTURE:

In a key structural verse, the Lord Jesus describes the geographical progress of the Gospel, 'in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth,' Acts 1. 8 NASB. We see this relentless advance happening in the book. Jerusalem is the focus for chapters 1-12, with occasional mentions of Judea and Samaria. Then, we travel further afield in chapters 13-28, from Antioch, a commercial centre, via Athens, an intellectual centre, to Rome, an imperial centre. In each city, and in each culture, the gospel takes a foothold. This is a challenge to us in our multicultural, globalized society. The same primitive gospel message, that 'Jesus died and rose again', 1 Thess. 4. 14, is just as necessary and effective today.

ADVENTURES IN ACTS



Relevance to us

When we read Acts, we are essentially scrolling back to the start of the church timeline. As with any life story, it is helpful to see how early events and decisions shape future direction and development. Since we are members of the church, we should have an awareness of what the church is and how it began. It is vital to recognize the distinction in Acts between one-off special events (e.g., the Spirit's arrival on the Day of Pentecost, 2. 1-4) and enduring principles (e.g., Christian fellowship, 2. 42).

Another useful line of study is the consideration of characters in the book. For instance, the two main characters are Peter, in chapters 1-12, and Paul, in chapters 13-28. Peter had failed Christ, and subsequently experienced His forgiveness. This is an encouragement to us, to seek restoration after failure, and to resume service for our Master. On the other hand, Paul had hated Christ, but subsequently had experienced His love. This is also a fantastic incentive for evangelism - even the most unlikely people can be saved by God's grace.

Further reading

Please take time to read through the Acts, and enjoy seeing God at work in and through His people. Below are some helpful study books, which should all be available from good Christian bookshops or online.

JOHN M. RIDDLE. *The Acts of the Apostles*. John Ritchie, 2012.

A useful book, recently published. It is fairly detailed but not too technical.

WARREN W. WIERSBE. *Be Dynamic Acts 1-12, and Be Daring Acts 13-28*.

David C. Cook, 2009 and 2010 (reprints).

As usual with the 'Be' series, these volumes are highly readable and eminently practical.

F. F. BRUCE. *The Book of the Acts*. New London Commentary version, Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1954.

Modern reprints are available. This is a more detailed technical work, not for the faint-hearted.



The Writing on the Wall

BY PAUL MCCAULEY BELFAST, NORTHERN IRELAND



It's great to see how the Bible stands. The attacks on its integrity and reliability have been relentless, but after every fresh wave of attacks the Bible emerges unscathed. Scientists have gone into the lab to disprove God, and have ended up providing more evidence of His existence. Archaeologists have gone to Bible lands to undermine confidence in the Bible, and have only managed to confirm it. King Belshazzar is a case in point.

For centuries scholars thought that Belshazzar was a legend, because no ancient historians referred to him, but rather spoke of how Nabonidus was the King of Babylon at the end of the Babylonian empire. The sceptics laughed at the gullibility of the Bible-believers – their holy book has been disproved, and can now be ignored.

But that's not the end of the story. It was well established by historians that Nabonidus was in North Arabia when Cyrus invaded Babylon, and, thus, there would have been a viceroy in charge during his absence. I wonder who that could have been?

Excavations at Ur (Iraq) in approximately 1854 uncovered a cylinder, which has been named the Nabonidus Cylinder. The cylinder contains prayers of Nabonidus for himself in his reign, and also for his firstborn son, whose name is . . . Belshazzar!

'As for me, Nabonidus, king of Babylon, save me from sinning against your great godhead and grant me as a present a lifelong of days, and as for Belshazzar, the eldest son – my offspring -- instil reverence for your great godhead in his heart and may he not commit any cultic mistake, may he be sated with a life of plenitude'.

The fact that prayers are included for Belshazzar indicates that he was in a position of authority too. This explains why, in Daniel chapter 5 verse 7, Belshazzar offered the third place in the Kingdom to whoever could interpret the writing – it was because Belshazzar was number two!

Furthermore, due to the stunning accuracy of the prophecies in Daniel, unbelievers had concluded that it must have been written well into the time of the Greek empire. They thought there's no way someone writing in the time of the Babylonian or Medo-Persian empires ever could have written so accurately about Alexander the Great and Antiochus Epiphanes etc., (because that would mean that God was somehow involved, and they couldn't have that!) But we know that Belshazzar was not known by Greek historians, such as Herodotus (approximately 450 BC). This shows that the book of Daniel must have been written much earlier than that. So the discovery of this inscription not only confirms the historical accuracy of Daniel, but also the prophetic accuracy – it is God's word. We have no need to fear the fiercest attacks of unbelievers – the foundation of our faith is more firm than the foundation of our feet! The Lord said, 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away', Matt. 24. 35.

In the last chapter we saw how God is able to humble the proudest of men, and in this chapter we see something similar, yet sadly different. God will humble sinners, but not everyone is brought to repentance. Belshazzar was profaning the holy vessels of the Temple, defiantly provoking God. With just a finger, God puts all the laughter out of him, sobers him up very quickly, and has his knees knocking together in absolute terror. He is brought to see that God is sovereign, but despite the wake up God gave him, and the

¹ This information has been taken largely from GLEASON L. ARCHER, The New International Encyclopaedia Of Bible Difficulties.

warning Daniel gave him, he is not saved.

It is worth reminding ourselves of this serious truth: not everyone will be saved. We are seeing a resurgence in the 'evangelical world' of the false doctrine of universalism. This used to be a doctrine that would never have seen the light of day in any Bible-believing church, but the internet has made the world a smaller place, and has made wrong doctrine a lot more accessible, and, thanks to some pastors, a lot more attractive. Now, what one compelling speaker says on his podcast, or what one trendy pastor says from his mega-church stage, can have worldwide reach and influence, and some people who used to take the title of 'evangelical' are embracing the view that everyone ultimately will be saved.

It is true that everyone will acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, Phil. 2. 9-11, and some have taken from this statement that this means they all are saved. FRANCIS CHAN points out:

'If you were on a deserted island and you uncorked an empty bottle containing Philippians 2. 9-11, you would probably be a Universalist . . . By itself, this could mean that every single individual who ever lived will embrace Jesus – if not in this life, then surely in the next.'²

But all we would need is for the rest of the Philippian letter to float ashore in order to see that Philippians 2. 9-11 doesn't teach universal salvation'.

To suppose that the man who wrote in the very same epistle of enemies of the cross that 'their end is destruction', 3. 19, actually believed that their end is heaven, is to demonstrate a commitment to one's own doctrine rather than to the word of God. All will certainly be subdued, but not all will be saved.

We also see from this chapter that salvation is not something that runs in the blood. You would think that with such an amazing testimony to the saving power and grace of God in the life of his grandfather, Belshazzar would have yielded to the Lord in repentance, but he doesn't. The experience of chapter 4 was something Belshazzar knew all about, and Daniel was keen

to remind him of that, vv. 18-22, but Belshazzar still hardened himself, and exalted himself against God.

It also shows that miraculous manifestations do not produce faith and repentance in the hearts of sceptics. People say all the time, 'If God made something appear right in front of me then I would believe'. It just is not true. God has given adequate evidence of His existence in the glory of creation, the witness of conscience, the canon of scripture, and the person of Christ. We remember that Abraham said, 'If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead', Luke 16. 31.

We see again the courage and integrity of this man, Daniel. Those of you who have been following these articles will be stifling a yawn here as you say that you've read all this before. So you have, in chapter one, chapter two, and chapter four (every chapter in which Daniel features), as we have observed, a man who will not flinch, no matter who he is facing. He lives in the shadow of the sovereign God and in the light of eternity, and thus, he will not be intimidated by any man's presence or influenced by any man's presents. He tells Belshazzar to keep his gifts, or give them to someone who cares about them, v. 17 – Daniel is not for sale, and faithfully he delivers God's message to this man.

What about you? Do you find yourself counting the cost of faithfulness, and holding back a bit when people ask you what your views are, or what the Bible's views are, on theological or moral issues? We ought, of course, to always speak in love, but the Bible's exhortation is to speak the truth in love, Eph. 4. 15. Faithfulness may be costly, but Daniel recognized that unfaithfulness is much more costly.

The mighty Babylonian empire came to an end that night. God was still on His throne, and Daniel continued to shine brightly, and touch lives in another empire. 'The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever', 1 John 2. 17.

² FRANCIS CHAN, *Erasing Hell: What God Said about Eternity, and the Things We've Made Up*, Preston Sprinkle, 2011. It is sad that this book is so weak on the subject of annihilationism, despite presenting compelling evidence that the Bible teaches eternal conscious punishment.

Come, Take, Learn, and Find,

BY PAUL COXALL ABERDEEN, SCOTLAND

All of us have received invitations that provoke questions such as, 'Who sent it?' 'What am I invited to?' and 'How should I respond?' In Matthew chapter 11 verses 28-30, the Lord Jesus gives an invitation, a command even, that can be summarized in four words: Come, Take, Learn, and Find.

Matt. 11. 28-30, 'Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light' ESV.

1) Come

The Lord Jesus gave the command of 'Come' in opposition to the word 'do', which was often used by the religious leaders of the day. He says, 'Come to me' not to a building, organization or religion but to Him. The tender care and compassion of God reaches out, and says 'come'. Just as a loving parent will hold out open arms for their young child who is scared, in danger, or needs comfort to run into, so the Lord Jesus, in like manner says 'Come, trust me'.

The Lord commands all people, regardless of age, wealth, social class, or intellectual ability, to come. Those who are working to be right with God can cease from that labour and come. Those who are burdened with thoughts of judgement, and eternity can come. They can come because He, through His life, death, and resurrection has secured for all who will come to Him a righteous standing before God.

2) Take

Those who come to the Lord will take His yoke upon them. The yoke was a piece of farming equipment that could be used to bind two animals together. It was made of wood to fit the neck and shoulders of the particular animal that was to wear it. The term 'yoke' is a metaphor for submission. The one that had the yoke on him was under the control, direction, and authority of the yoke owner.

The yoke of false works-based religion was heavy and burdensome to those who heard Him. 'Be

free from that yoke' was His call. Not 'free to live as I want', but 'free to live as I should'. The Lord promised, v. 30, that, 'My yoke is easy and my burden is light'. He who loves us and knows us completely has just the yoke that is tailor-made for our lives and needs. The burden of doing His will is not a heavy one, 1 John 5. 3.

3) Learn

Paul could speak to an assembly of Christians, who were attracted by the philosophical intellectuals of the day, and tell them they did not need to be instructed by them as 'we have the mind of Christ', 1 Cor. 2. 16. Through the Bible, and by the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit, the believer can know God's thoughts on life, eternity, business, family, marriage, and relationships.

In Luke chapter 10 verses 39-42, an incident is recorded where Martha complains about Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus, and not helping to serve. He reminds Martha that, 'Mary has chosen what is better' - to learn from Him!

4) Find

The Lord's gives a definite promise of spiritual rest to everyone who comes to Him in repentance and humble faith. He gives rest. The rest of a conscience no longer troubled; the rest of a conscious friendship and union with God; the rest of fears dispelled; the rest of forgiveness received into the heart.

In Christ we find rest. There is rest in submission, in relinquishing the control of our life; peace in saying, 'Take the reins, rule, and guide me'. Learning from Him enables a greater knowledge of the rest He alone can give.

Conclusion

There is none so good that they need not come, and there is none so bad that they cannot come. The on-going mark of the blessed life after coming is submission to Him, learning from Him, and finding rest in Him.