

## Tongue Twister Theology

Romans 3:22-28

This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. Because of what law? The law that requires works? No, because of the law that requires faith. For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.

How many of you have ever read “Fox in Socks”?

There are many people who love this book. Its uniqueness lies in the fact that it features 2 main characters Mr. Fox and Mr. Knox who converse almost entirely in densely rhyming tongue-twisters.

Years ago, there was a TV sitcom about aliens who came to earth and tried to figure out “earth culture”. One episode dealt with the “leader” of this group examining “Fox In Socks” as a way of understanding the literature of human beings. He read a short segment of the “tweetle beetle battle” that I’m going to read for you next and recited it flawlessly without seeming to take a breath.

This part of the book goes this way:

“What do you know about tweetle beetles?

Well... when tweetle beetles fight, it’s called a tweetle beetle battle.

And when they battle in a puddle, it’s a tweetle beetle puddle battle.

AND when tweetle beetles battle with paddles in a puddle, They call it a tweetle beetle puddle paddle battle.

AND...when beetles battle beetles in a puddle paddle battle And the beetle battle puddle is a puddle IN a bottle...

They call this a tweetle beetle bottle puddle paddle battle muddle.

AND... when beetles fight these battles in a bottle with their paddles and the bottle’s ON a poodle and the poodle’s eating noodles

... they call this a muddle puddle tweetle poodle beetle noodle bottle paddle battle.”

(pause)

After reciting part of the poem, the “alien” paused dramatically and said “The man’s a genius!”

That sitcom character was clueless about the fact that this was simply a children’s book. But in that one statement, there was a great deal of insight. The alien associated genius with something being complicated. If it was complicated, it had to be intelligent.

I’ve noticed that – when it comes to the Bible - there are people who think the same way. There are PhD’s and theologians and Bible commentators that aren’t satisfied until they can make the most common Bible ideas unrecognizable.

A case in point is on the Biblical doctrine of justification. Romans 3:23 says it plainly: “... all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God” And in verse 24 we’re told we “are JUSTIFIED freely by his grace through the

redemption that came by Christ Jesus.” The message is simple.

God JUSTIFIES us freely – even when we didn’t deserve it:

The Bible teaches us that we are all sinners; all under God’s righteous wrath; all under condemnation. And there is nothing that we can do to save ourselves.

#### I. So HOW could we be saved?

A. The only way it is possible to be saved is if God did it for us.

1. And that’s what justification is all about.
2. God “justified” us.
3. Being justified is the “legal and formal acquittal from guilt by God as Judge”.
  - a. Our sins made us guilty in God’s presence
  - b. But God (the righteous judge) justified us. Christ paid for our sins.
4. We didn’t deserve it...but Christ paid it.
5. As one person once said
  - a. “Being Justified means God made it JUST AS IF I’D never sinned”
  - b. It’s a cute simple phrase that helps us realize what a powerful thing God has done for us.

B. But one scholar didn’t like that phrase.

1. He thought it was too simple.
2. He wanted something more complicated.
3. One article in particular dealt with justification.
4. The first line in the article caught my attention. The author wrote:

5. “Justification remains controversial.
6. He went on to say that New Testament scholars were “reexamining” Paul’s teaching of justification.
7. Now why all this hubbub in the religious community about justification?
8. Why would it be “controversial”?
9. Is it that hard a doctrine to understand?
10. All that these ‘re-examinations” are going to do is muddy the waters.
11. They’re going to take a straightforward Bible teaching and make it complicated.
12. I believe they’re making it complicated because it’s hard to accept.

#### II. But why would it be hard for people to accept?

A. 1st - In order for me to be justified by God – I have to accept the fact that I NEED IT!

1. I have to believe that I have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.
2. And I have to believe that there’s nothing I can do without God’s justifying me.
3. That’s hard for a lot of people to accept.
  - a. They don’t like taking blame for their actions.
  - b. They would prefer to “justify” themselves.
4. A boy hits his brother and bloodies his brother’s nose. When his mother asks why he did it, he’ll respond – he hit me first!
  - a. What’s that boy doing?

- b. He's "Justifying" his actions.
  - c. "Yes," he says "I did something wrong... but it's his fault."
5. When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, God asked Adam why he did it!
- a. What was Adam's response?
    - (1) "The woman you gave me – it was HER fault"
    - (2) It's my husband's fault
    - (3) It's my wife's fault.
    - (4) It's neighbor's fault.
    - (5) My co-worker's fault.
    - (6) My boss's fault.
    - (7) The government's fault.
    - (8) And it goes on and on.
  - B. I may have done a bad thing, but I JUSTIFY myself by blaming someone or something else.
    - 1. But God says: "that's not going to fly!"
    - 2. When you and I stand before the judgment seat of God, God won't ask you what this or that person did to you.
    - 3. The only testimony He's going to consider is what you did.
    - 4. And the first step to being justified by God is to accept that you're not good enough.
      - a. On the merits – you and I are factory rejects.
      - b. The only thing that's going to make us acceptable is if we allow God to reach in and fix us.
  - C. So people have a hard time accepting justification is, they'd rather do it themselves.

- III. The 2nd reason it's hard for people to accept the doctrine of justification is that it doesn't fit our concept of justice.
- A. Look again at Romans 3:26 "he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus."
    - 1. God justified us in order to show us His form of justice.
  - B. But God's form of justice and ours are different.
    - 1. Our form of justice can be summed up the saying:
    - 2. "If you do the crime... (you do the time)"
    - 3. The mind of mortal man says: If you do evil in your life you need to balance it out with good.
    - 4. The great boxer – Mohammed Ali – once said:
    - 5. "One day we're all going to die and God is going to judge us—our good deeds and bad deeds. If the bad outweighs the good, you go to hell. If the good outweighs the bad, you go to heaven"
    - 6. That's the theology that's taught by every world religion.
    - 7. But the one place you'll never hear it taught is in Scripture.
    - 8. The Doctrine of Justification tells us "we can't get there from here."
  - C. BUT because this is so appealing to our sense of justice, over the centuries, even church authorities have often been guilty of rejecting it.

- D. Penance, for example, was the teaching that said sinful men and women were required to PAY for sins before they could be forgiven.
1. According to “The History of the Church” “The Sacrament of Penance and priestly absolution included... contrition of the heart, confession by the mouth, SATISFACTION BY GOOD WORKS. On these conditions, the priests grant absolution...”
  2. If you didn’t do penance, you didn’t receive forgiveness.
  3. Penance, back in the Middle Ages could involve things like
    - a. • intense fasting
    - b. • sleeping on a cold bench with no blankets
    - c. • enduring beatings
  4. The penitent who did these activities would gain brownie points in their pursuit of receiving forgiveness.
- E. Then along came Martin Luther - a good Catholic priest.
1. But he was deeply troubled by his sense of unworthiness so he did repeated acts of contrition and penance to try to win God’s forgiveness.
    - a. • He’d repeatedly fast
    - b. • Sleep in the snow.
    - c. • Endure repeated beatings
    - d. • He kissed the steps that led to the Pope’s throne
  2. Reminds me of a man who was a teen in the Church of the Nazarene when I was a new Christian. He said he would come down to the altar to ask God to forgive him and on the way back to his pew he would see this certain girl and he said he sinned before he could sit down.
    - a. Luther had fallen prey to the concept of self justification.
    - b. If he did enough good things his good deeds would outweigh the bad.
      - (1) But he soon realized that doing good deeds couldn’t relieve his guilt.
      - (2) His sins weren’t removed... they were still there.
  3. But Martin Luther , one day as he was studying came across Romans 3:28
  4. “For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.”
    - a. As he read that verse he suddenly realized that justification came by faith... not works.”
  5. One ad for the U.S. Marines pictures a sword, and beneath it are the words: “Earned, never given.”
  6. If you want to become a Marine, you
- e. And – when he left the confessional – he’d often turn right around and go back in to repent of further sins.

must be prepared to earn that name through sacrifice, hardship, and training.

7. But, if you want to become a Christian, you must understand God's message of grace, you have to reject the idea of "Earned, never given" and replace it with: "Given, never earned."
8. We DON'T receive God's justification because we deserve it... we receive it because God loves us.
9. So, the 1st reason people have problems with justification is – they'd rather do it themselves.
10. The 2nd reason is it offends their sense of justice (they feel you ought to deserve forgiveness)

IV. AND the 3rd reason people have problems with Biblical justification is that they've learned to accept men's teachings and rather than God's.

- A. That's why Martin Luther had trouble with the Catholic Church of his day.
- B. Justification and grace and mercy didn't make sense to them so they invented their own doctrines to make themselves more comfortable.
  1. Works of Penance - like what Luther did.
  2. • Indulgences – where the church sold forgiveness for a price.
  3. • And purgatory – a place where a person could work off sins.
- C. But even though Martin Luther rejected many of the man-made teachings of his day, many of those

who admire what he accomplished have perverted one of his greatest discoveries.

1. When Luther discovered that it was faith – not works – that brought justification he wrote in his Bible "FAITH ALONE".
2. Those were Luther's words... not Scripture's.

But in spite of the fact that the Bible never said we're justified by faith "alone", many have developed a doctrine they call "faith only" and have attempted to place this man-made doctrine on top of Scripture. It's often preached as if the words are right out of Scripture... but they're simply not there, and the Bible never actually teaches that. What the Bible says is:

1. We are saved by grace thru the blood of Jesus
2. And we accept that salvation by believing that Jesus is the Christ/ Son of God
3. But faith alone, isn't all that God asks of us
  - a. He asks that we repent (Acts 2:38)
  - b. He asks that we confess that Jesus is Lord and owner of our lives (Romans 10:9-10).
  - c. And He asks that we be buried in the waters of baptism and risen up a new creature.

TURN TO ROMANS 6:3-7

"Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.

For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.”

These are not requests from Scripture that we need to repeat over and over each time we sin. Instead they were God’s way for us to appeal to Him for His gift of salvation.

I want to close with some observations by Lee Strobel. “As we say around here, other religions are spelled ‘D-O,’ because they teach that people have to do a bunch of religious rituals to try to please God.

But Christianity is spelled ‘D-O-N-E’ because Christ has done it all on the cross.”

Then Strobel tells about a story found in Buddhist literature. It’s much like the parable of the “Prodigal Son” that Jesus tells, but there is a dramatic difference. Both stories involve sons who became rebellious and left home, but who then saw the error of their ways and decided to come back and be reconciled with their families. However, in the Buddhist story, the errant son is required to work off the penalty for his past misdeeds by spending years in servitude.

But you know how the Christian parable of the Prodigal Son ends — with the repentant son being warmly welcomed home by his loving father and being given undeserved grace and forgiveness.

While President Obama will pardon ,any people in his last days as President. They will be set free, but not justified. But when God pardons us he justifies us through the blood of Jesus. He paid the price for our sin so in God’s eyes we are justified as if we had never done anything wrong to begin with. Jesus took our sins with him to the cross, all we have to do is accept it. Simple enough?

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- II. But why would it be hard for people to \_\_\_\_\_?
  - A. 1st - In order for me to be justified by God – I have to accept the fact that I \_\_\_\_\_ IT!
  - B. I may have done a bad thing, but I JUSTIFY myself by \_\_\_\_\_ someone or something else.
- II. The 2nd reason it’s hard for people to accept the doctrine of justification is that it doesn’t fit our concept of \_\_\_\_\_.
  - A. But \_\_\_\_\_ form of justice and ours are different.
- III. AND the 3rd reason people have problems with Biblical justification is that they’ve learned to accept men’s \_\_\_\_\_ and rather than God’s.
- IV. Justification and grace and mercy didn’t make sense to them so they invented their own doctrines to make themselves more \_\_\_\_\_.

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