

# VENTURING BEYOND

Going deeper in this week's message topic through *Intentional Intimacy with the Almighty God*

The apostle Paul develops in the book of Romans an intricate storyline of sin and death and of grace and salvation. We find out very early that all are without excuse, all have fallen short of God's glorious standard – both Jew and Gentile (Rom. 3:23). In the beginning chapters, Paul delivers a divine indictment against all the nations (1:18-32) and against God's own chosen nation (2:1-3:8). It is solely in Christ Jesus that anyone at all is justified by God, who in Christ is just and the justifier (vv. 24-26).

The prime historical example of how God works out the justification of His people is with the patriarch Abraham (Rom. 4). This is appropriated by a faith given by God to His people, and God counts them then as righteous (remember, He is both just in doing so, and the justifier, because of the perfect life and work of Christ). God must justify because all stand condemned in Adam, the first rebel (5:12-21). Since all are dead and in need of a new heavenly birth, it is the second Adam, Christ Jesus, Who is the one Man who's obedience will make many to be righteous (v. 19).

So now with justification established, Paul begins to transition to the Christian life lived out in sanctification. This process of being more holy does not come without growing pains. We are to be dead to sin (Rom. 6:2). We must consider ourselves "dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus" (v. 11). In the first Adam, we are slaves to sin, but in the greater second, we are slaves to righteousness (vv. 17-19). Even in Christ, our common default is to sin (7:15-25), but being freed from sin's enslavement, and by the Spirit's power, sanctification's fruit is ever yielding to righteousness (6:22; also, 8:1-11). Thus, in closing, as one commentator notes, "Christ's death 'on our behalf' (cf. 5:6-8) frees us not only from the penalty of sin but from the power of sin also. Justification – acquittal from the guilt of sin – and sanctification – deliverance from 'sinning' – must never be confused, but neither can they be separated."\*

It takes a mighty work of the Father in the Son by the Holy Spirit to conform us into the original *Imago Dei* (image and likeness of God) that we were intended to be.

\* Douglas Moo, *Romans*, NICNT, Eerdmans, 1996, p. 350.