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GROUP STUDY GUIDE

The Righteous Shall Live By Faith

TEACHING SUMMARY

This teaching examines Acts 13:39, a verse often used to argue that God's Law has been set aside and that justification by faith began only after the coming of Messiah. The lesson seeks to answer two foundational questions before interpreting the passage: First, could anyone ever be justified by the Law? Second, was faith required before the coming of Messiah? By answering these questions from Scripture, the teaching argues that Acts 13:39 is consistent with the rest of the Bible and does not teach that God's Law has been abolished.

The lesson begins by examining Acts 13:39, where Paul declares that everyone who believes is justified from what the Law of Moses could not justify. Rather than concluding that the Law once saved but no longer does, the teaching explains that the Law was never intended to justify anyone before God. Paul himself confirms this in Galatians 3:11, where he writes that no one is justified before God by the Law because "the righteous shall live by faith." The teaching points out that Paul supports his argument by quoting the Old Testament rather than introducing a new doctrine.

Attention then turns to Romans 1:17, where Paul again quotes, "The righteous shall live by faith." The lesson emphasizes that Paul is quoting Habakkuk 2:4, demonstrating that justification by faith was already established centuries before the New Testament. This shows that faith has always been God's means of justification and was never replaced by obedience to the Law as a method of earning salvation. Paul's teaching simply reaffirms what the Hebrew Scriptures had always taught.

The teaching stresses that Paul could not introduce doctrines that contradicted the Scriptures. The Bereans are presented as an example because they examined the Scriptures daily to determine whether Paul's teaching was true. Likewise, Paul would have had to pass the test of Deuteronomy 13, which warns against any teacher who leads God's people away from His commandments. Therefore, Paul's teaching on faith cannot

be interpreted as abolishing God's Law, since such an interpretation would contradict both the Old Testament and Paul's own statements.

The lesson then examines Romans 3:28–31. Paul teaches that people are justified by faith apart from works of the law, yet only a few verses later he asks whether faith nullifies the Law. His answer is emphatic: "By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law." The teaching explains that obedience to God's commandments has never been the means of justification. Instead, obedience has always been the proper response of those who trust God. Faith establishes the believer's relationship with God, while obedience demonstrates that faith.

Hebrews 4:2 is then introduced to show that the gospel was preached to the Israelites who left Egypt just as it has been preached to believers today. However, the message did not benefit many of them because they did not combine it with faith. The teaching argues that this proves faith was required under the Old Covenant as well. The Israelites possessed God's instructions, yet without faith their obedience was incomplete and their unbelief prevented them from entering the Promised Land.

To reinforce this point, the lesson examines Hebrews 3:15–19. The author explains that the Israelites failed to enter God's rest because of unbelief. The teaching highlights that Hebrews equates unbelief with disobedience. This relationship demonstrates that faith and obedience cannot be separated. Genuine faith produces obedience, while persistent disobedience reveals unbelief. The lesson also connects this principle with James' teaching that faith without works is dead, showing that faith has always been evidenced by obedient living.

The teaching then turns to Hebrews 11, often called the "Hall of Faith." Every individual highlighted in this chapter lived under the Old Covenant, yet they are consistently described as people who lived by faith. Their examples demonstrate that faith did not begin with the New Testament but has characterized God's faithful people throughout history. Hebrews 10 also quotes Habakkuk by declaring that God's righteous people live by faith while persevering in obedience. The lesson argues that Scripture consistently presents faith as the foundation of a righteous life in every generation.

Returning to Acts 13, the teaching explains that Paul was confronting a first-century error that taught people could be justified through the Law for salvation. The historical setting in Galatia, together with the later events of Acts 15 and the letter to the Galatians, indicates that certain teachers insisted obedience to the Law was the means of obtaining justification. Paul rejected this teaching while continuing to affirm the value and authority of God's Law. His message was that justification comes only through faith in Messiah, while obedience follows as the evidence of that faith.

The lesson concludes by affirming that no one has ever been justified by the Law. God's Law defines sin, reveals humanity's need for redemption, and teaches believers how to live in obedience. Grace through Messiah Yeshua provides forgiveness and justification, but that grace never abolishes God's commandments. Instead, believers uphold the Law

because they love God and desire to walk according to His Word. The righteous have always lived by faith, and true faith has always produced faithful obedience.

SUMMARY POINTS

- Acts 13:39 does not teach that God's Law has been abolished.
 - The Law has never been the means of justification.
 - Paul quotes Habakkuk to show that the righteous have always lived by faith.
 - Justification by faith is an Old Testament teaching.
 - The Bereans tested Paul's teaching against Scripture.
 - Paul upheld God's Law even while teaching justification by faith.
 - Faith and obedience have always belonged together.
 - The Israelites heard the gospel but failed because of unbelief.
 - Hebrews equates unbelief with disobedience.
 - The Hall of Faith demonstrates that Old Testament believers lived by faith.
 - Acts 13 addresses legalism rather than obedience.
 - God's Law defines sin but cannot justify sinners.
 - Grace through Messiah provides justification.
 - Genuine faith is demonstrated by obedience.
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FILL-IN-THE-BLANK

Basic

1. Paul says the righteous shall live by _____.
2. Acts 13 teaches that believers are justified through _____.
3. Paul quotes the prophet _____ when teaching justification by faith.
4. The Bereans examined the _____ daily.
5. Romans 3 says that faith does not overthrow the _____.

6. Hebrews says the Israelites failed because of _____.
 7. God's Law defines _____.
 8. Grace through Messiah provides _____.
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Challenging

1. Habakkuk 2:4 declares that the righteous shall live by _____.
 2. Deuteronomy _____ warns against teachers who lead people away from God's commandments.
 3. Hebrews 4 says the gospel did not benefit many Israelites because it was not united with _____.
 4. James teaches that faith without _____ is dead.
 5. Hebrews 11 is commonly called the Hall of _____.
 6. Acts 13 addresses those seeking justification through the _____.
 7. Paul says believers should _____ the Law through faith.
 8. The teaching concludes that obedience is the _____ of genuine faith.
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GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is it important that Paul bases his teaching on Old Testament Scripture rather than introducing something new?
 2. How does Habakkuk 2:4 shape your understanding of justification by faith?
 3. Why do you think the Bereans examined the Scriptures instead of accepting Paul's teaching without question?
 4. How do Romans 3:28 and Romans 3:31 work together rather than contradict one another?
 5. What does Hebrews teach about the relationship between unbelief and disobedience?
 6. How does the Hall of Faith demonstrate that faith has always been central to God's plan?
 7. Why is it important to distinguish between justification and obedience?
 8. In what ways should genuine faith be visible in the life of a believer?
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ANSWER KEY – GROUP GUIDE

Basic

1. Faith
2. Messiah
3. Habakkuk
4. Scriptures
5. Law
6. Unbelief
7. Sin
8. Justification

Challenging

1. Faith
2. 13
3. Faith
4. Works
5. Faith
6. Law
7. Uphold
8. Evidence