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HONOR, SHAME, AND THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

The last thirty years have seen a veritable explosion of studies regarding the thought of Paul of Tarsus. This avalanche of studies has brought only one point of consensus: There is no consensus. However, I want to focus on Paul's thought for two reasons. The biblical documents are foundational for the LDS canon and accepted as authoritative. Paul's views are therefore also foundational for LDS. However, I also want to focus on Paul's thought because it is insightful and profound regarding the loving relationship offered by God to us. His polemic of justification by grace is a statement of God's willingness to accept us just as we are without judgment the very moment that we turn to him in faith. In other words, Paul's doctrine of justification by grace is the simple statement that God loves us without imposing judgment on us in the sense that God accepts us into relationship with him as a matter of his grace.

The critical notion in justification by faith is the movement of "entering into relationship," where God's offer of relationship and willingness to accept us as we are is universal as a matter of grace. Justification is an expression of God's universal love. God's willingness to accept us into relationship is a gift that, by its very nature, cannot be earned or merited by what we do. Nevertheless, there is the crucial movement of faith, of turning one's entire heart to Christ and through Christ to the Father. In this movement, we are enabled and freed from our self-deception that we can