

Hunter Whiddon
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Soteriology

Justification

Justification is a legal term, and the doctrine of Justification is that facet of the “diamond of salvation” that deals with man’s guilt before the Judge of all the earth (Genesis 18:25). It has to do with a man’s standing before God, not his state. (Sanctification is that aspect of salvation that deals with a believer’s state.)

I. THE MEANING OF JUSTIFICATION

Justification is the act of God whereby a saved person is declared to be cleared of all blame, to be freed from every charge.

“Justification is that instantaneous, everlasting, gracious, free, judicial act of God, whereby, on account of the merit of Christ’s blood and righteousness, a repentant, believing sinner is freed from the penalty of the law, restored to God’s favor, and considered as possessing the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ; by virtue of all which he receives adoption as a son.” (1)

Justification does not declare the sinner ‘not guilty,’ but “as-not-guilty.” The act does not make one righteous, but declares one to be righteous in God’s sight.

JUSTIFIED = “Just-if-I’d never sinned”

Such an act of God is contrary to human thought. In a court of law, man will justify the innocent only on the ground of merit — but God justifies the guilty on the ground of Christ’s atonement.

Romans 8:33 — “It is God that justifieth.”

Where man cannot both forgive and justify, God can — because on the cross His

Son not only bore the punishment for our sins, but also the judgment for our sins.

The believer is never again judged for his sins. His sins were judged in the Saviour on the cross — his sins (past, present, and future) were imputed to the Saviour, and Christ is accounted to the believer as Righteousness.

II Corinthians 5:21 — “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

Justification is a once-only act. We are justified in the sight of God forever. The believer may need to be forgiven as a child of the Father, but he can never again be arraigned as a criminal before the Judge.

Justification is the act of a judge — Forgiveness is the act of a parent.

II. THE MEANS OF JUSTIFICATION

In order to be justified before God, we must come on His terms.

A. JUSTIFICATION IS NOT ON THE GROUNDS OF WORKS:

We stand before God already proven guilty, and no man is able to justify himself. No man can give a satisfactory reason why he should be allowed to have eternal life.

Romans 3:20 — “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”

B. JUSTIFICATION IS THROUGH THE MERITS OF JESUS CHRIST:

Romans 3:24-26 — “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”

It is Christ’s death and resurrection that are the grounds of our justification:

Acts 13:38,39 — “Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.”

Romans 4:25 — “Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.”

Romans 5:9 — “Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.”

Our Heavenly “court” record reads like this:

C. JUSTIFICATION IS BY GRACE:

While the atonement of Christ is the grounds of our justification, the love, grace, and mercy of God is its cause.

Romans 3:24 — “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

Romans 5:8 — “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

Ephesians 2:4-6 — “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”

If we received what we deserve — if we asked for justice — we would immediately be consigned to Hell and/or the Lake of Fire.

D. JUSTIFICATION IS THROUGH FAITH:

We must come by faith to be saved. Faith is the acceptance of God's declared method of justification (the blood of Christ), and our acting upon it. Faith appropriates what grace provides.

Romans 1:17 — “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The JUST shall live by FAITH.”

Romans 3:28 — “Therefore we conclude that a man is JUSTIFIED by FAITH without the deeds of the law.”

Romans 4:5 — “But to him that worketh not, but BELIEVETH on him that JUSTIFIETH the ungodly, his FAITH is counted for righteousness.”

Romans 5:1 — “Therefore being JUSTIFIED by FAITH, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Because we are justified by faith, there can be no boasting — Romans 3:27.

III. THE NATURE OF JUSTIFICATION

A. IT IS INSTANTANEOUS: Justification is a judicial act, not a process.

Luke 18:14 — “I tell you, this man went down to his house justified...”

“The justification of the believer is always put in the past tense. There is not in all the Bible the slightest hint of a continuous process in Justification.” (2)

B. IT IS ETERNAL:

Once acquitted in a court of law, a man cannot be tried for the same crime again. The believer “shall not come [again] into condemnation” (John 5:24). No one can “lay anything to the charge of God’s elect” (Romans 8:33).

IV. THE RESULTS OF JUSTIFICATION

A. PEACE WITH GOD:

Romans 5:1 — “Therefore being JUSTIFIED by faith, we have PEACE with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Romans 5:10 — “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.”

The war is over. See: Ephesians 2:15,16; Colossians 1:20.

B. NO MORE CONDEMNATION:

Romans 8:1 — “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

C. NO MORE INCRIMINATION:

Romans 8:33,34 — “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God...”

D. THE REMISSION OF SINS:

Acts 13:38,39 — “Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.” This includes the removal of its guilt and penalty.

E. A RECKONED (IMPUTED) RIGHTEOUSNESS:

Romans 5:18,19 — “Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so BY THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF ONE the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so BY THE OBEDIENCE OF ONE shall many be made righteous.”

I Corinthians 1:30 — “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is MADE UNTO US wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”

II Corinthians 5:21 — “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that WE MIGHT BE MADE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM.”

Philippians 3:9 — “And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”

James 2:23 — “...Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.”

When God looks at the believer IN Christ, He only sees Jesus Christ — thus the believer is seen as absolutely righteous in God’s judicial sight.

See also: Romans 3:22; 4:3-6; 10:4.

F. AN ASSURANCE OF GLORIFICATION:

Romans 5:2 — “By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

Romans 8:30 — “Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”

G. ETERNAL LIFE:

Titus 3:7 — “That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

H. FREEDOM FROM THE LAW:

1. The Believer Is No Longer Under The Law Of Moses.

See: Romans 6:4; 10:4; I Corinthians 9:21.

a. He is free from its penalty — Christ paid that!

See: Galatians 3:13.

b. He is free from its power — the indwelling Spirit sees to that! See: Romans 7:4-6; 8:2,4; Galatians 5:18.

2. The Believer Is Now Under The Law Of Christ.

See: I John 2:3,4. This is the Law of Love.

John 14:15 **15** If ye love me, keep my commandments.