

The Foundations of our Faith – Justification

by Pastor Trevor Harris

Module 1- Week 2 :

KEY VERSES: Romans 3:24 " And all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came through Jesus Christ."

Romans 5:1 "Therefore since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

In last week's study we looked at the Gospel call and how men and women are saved through Christ's work on the Cross. We looked at regeneration (being born again) and how God imparts new spiritual life into the hearts of those who believe, through repenting of sin and turning to and trusting in Christ's sacrifice on the Cross.

The Gospel message invited us to trust in Christ for the forgiveness of sins. Regeneration (being born again) made it possible for us to respond to that invitation. A miracle takes place in our hearts when we respond to the Gospel message- it is at that moment that God imparts spiritual life into us once again.

But what about guilt? Even though we are forgiven by God, we may still have feelings of guilt about our past. Forgiveness is one thing, but how do we leave the past behind in our minds and experience? Understanding Justification helps us do that.

-
- *We will cover 3 main headings this week:-*

1. What is Justification ?

- 1.1 What does the Bible teach us about Justification
- 1.2 Follows faith in Jesus Christ
- 1.3 The exact opposite to condemnation

2. How are we Justified ?

- 2.1 Works & wages or Grace & gift ?
- 2.2 Not self justification
- 2.3 Faith versus works

3. What are the spiritual benefits of Justification?

- 3.1 Imputed righteousness
 - 3.2 Peace & assurance
 - 3.3 Trusting beyond ourselves
-

Introduction –

The second great doctrine at the heart of the Christian faith is the doctrine of JUSTIFICATION. If you can grasp the spiritual truths in Justification, you will be released from the past and live guilt free an overcoming Christian life.

One of the great men of the Reformation in the 16thC, Martin Luther, describes Justification by faith as “the chief article from which all other doctrines have flowed.”

He said “If the article of Justification is lost, then all Christian doctrine is lost at the same time. It alone begets, nourishes, builds, preserves and defends the Church of God, and without it the Church cannot exist for one hour.”

1.0 What is Justification?

Greek “DIKAIOS” – means “to declare righteous”.
It is a legal and judicial term.

- Justification is the legal and formal acquittal from guilt of a person by God as Judge
- It is not merely forgiveness
- It is not just the excusing of sins

- **Justification is the declaration by God that the believer is declared righteous through faith in Jesus Christ**

Even today, the doctrine of Justification is the dividing line between the true Gospel as revealed in the Bible, and the false gospel which still proposes that men & women can be declared righteous by God through their good works or religious observance of rituals and practices.

1.1 What does the Bible teach us about Justification?

When the Apostle Paul gives us an overview of the process by which God applies salvation to the believer, he mentions justification explicitly

Romans 8:30.....

As explained in our previous study, the word “called” (Gk “kaleo”) here refers to the effective calling of the Gospel. Literally means “to urge” or “to hail”.

After effective calling and the response that is initiated on our part, the next step in the application of redemption is “justification”. Look at the verse again “Those whom he called He also justified.

1.2 Justification follows faith in Jesus Christ:-

Moreover, the Bible teaches us that Justification comes *after* our faith and is God’s response to our faith in Jesus Christ. It is immediate and instantaneous upon our response to the Gospel call.

Paul says that a person is justified by his faith and not by their works or deeds:-

Romans 3:26.....

We are justified, declared righteous, the moment we accept Jesus Christ as our Saviour. Do not make the mistake in thinking that Justification is a gradual work. It is not to be confused with Sanctification (next week) which is progressive and gradual in our lives. Justification is immediate.

1.3 Justification is the opposite to condemnation:-

Romans 5:18.....

Note the contrast explained in this verse- *“one trespass (Adam) resulted in condemnation for all people...”*

So also *“one righteous act (Jesus on the Cross) resulted in justification and life for all people...”*

Romans 8:1.....

“Condemnation” here is Gk = “Katakrima” = “no guilty verdict”

NOTE: Paul uses a picture here of a Courtroom- so let’s for a moment imagine a Courtroom scene.....the accused stands in the Dock. The charges have been laid against him....the evidence has been heard and seems overwhelming. There is now only one of tow outcomes- either the accused will be found guilty by the Court or he will be acquitted. If the accused is found guilty, we will say that he is condemned; and because he is condemned he will receive punishment.

BUT WHAT IF.....even on the evidence the accused is clearly guilty but because he believes in the Judge, he finds him NOT GUILTY and pronounces him not guilty (no guilty verdict), there is no punishment, not because he is innocent, but because of the Judge’s pronouncement, the accused will go free. THAT’S JUSTIFICATION.

And that is the situation in reality that all men will one day face. Many will stand before God as the Righteous Judge of all the Earth at the judgement Court of Heaven. The evidence against us is clear in that “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God”, but those who trust in Christ have been declared “righteous”- not by their works but by their faith in Jesus Christ- the righteousness that comes by faith:-

Romans 3:22.....

Philippians 3:9.....

That’s exactly what God does for us in Jesus Christ- He pronounces the guilty are righteous, He forgives and cancels our debts and bestows upon us a righteous standing before God.

Justification is “Forgiveness-plus” !

The 16C Reformers, whom the Holy Spirit enlightened to re-discover the Biblical Gospel of “justification by faith alone” were utterly convinced of its central importance.

And it’s free !

Romans 3:24.....

2.0 *How are we Justified?*

2.1 Works & wages or grace & gift ?

In Romans 4, Paul uses the illustration of WORKS & WAGES –v- GRACE & GIFT to highlight the difference in Justification by faith.

Romans 4:4-5.....

V4 is works and wages

V5 is grace and gift

The word “credited” (KJV ‘counted’) is a banking term. When you pay money into your bank account you have to fill out a “credit slip”

Gk = ‘logizomai’

“Counted” in Romans 4:3 and Romans 4:5

“Reckoned” in Romans 4:4 and Romans 4:10

It means the same. “to take an Inventory...to make a List”

2.2 Not self justification

A lawyer poses a question to Jesus:-

Luke 10:25-37.....

V25 the question was not sincere. It was a ‘test’.

V29 is the lawyer’s “cop-out”

Romans 10:3.....

2.3 Faith versus works

Romans 3:24.....

- We are justified freely by His grace
- God justifies those who put their faith & trust in Jesus
- 2 No. vital spiritual principles at work in our lives – **grace & faith**
- By grace we receive it by faith we apply it.

Ephesians 2:8.....

3.0 What are the spiritual benefits of Justification?

3.1 Imputed righteousness

When we say that God *imputes* Christ’s righteousness to us it means that God thinks of Christ’s righteousness as belonging to us, or that he regards it as belonging to us. He “reckons” it to our account.

In Romans 4, Ap. Paul uses the Patriarch Abraham as an example of his faith being counted or reckoned as righteousness

Romans 4:3.....
(quoting from Genesis 15:6)

Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness.

- A powerful picture of this imputed righteousness is given to us in by the prophet Isaiah:-

Isaiah 61:10.....

- But our own righteousness is as:-

Isaiah 64:6.....

- When we came to the Cross a transference took place:-

Isaiah 53:6.....

Revelation 7:13-14.....

“Are your garments spotless, are they white as snow, are you washed in the Blood of the Lamb?”

It is essential to the heart of the Gospel to insist that God declares us to be just or righteous not on the basis of our *actual* condition of righteousness or holiness, but rather on the basis of Christ’s perfect righteousness, which He regards as belonging to us.

- Justification comes to us entirely by God’s grace and not on account of any merit ourselves

Romans 3:10-12.....

After Paul explains in chapter 3 of Romans that no-one will ever be able to make themselves righteous before God (Romans 3:20) as all have sinned and fall short, he then goes on to explain that *they are justified by His grace as a gift* through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:-

Romans 3:23-24.....

The important words there are *“to be received by faith....”* *Justification is by faith alone.*

So finally, what is the outcome?

3.2 Peace and assurance

Romans 5:1.....

Isaiah 32:17.....

So many Christians, even after their conversion to Christ, are dogged by doubts and fears and troubled by their past. A correct understanding of their standing in Christ will help to overcome these fears.

In conclusion, we may ask why God chose faith to be the attitude of heart by which we would obtain justification. Why could God not have decided to give justification to all those who sincerely show love? Or show joy? Or show humility? Or wisdom? Why did God choose faith as the means by which we are justified?

Answer? It is because faith is the one attitude of heart which is the exact opposite of depending on ourselves. When a person genuinely comes to Christ, in effect they are saying: “I give up. I will no longer depend on myself or my good works any longer. I know that I can never make myself righteous before God. Therefore Jesus, I trust you and depend upon your death on the Cross to give a right standing before God.”

3.3 Trusting beyond ourselves

In this way, faith is the exact opposite to trusting in ourselves and fits perfectly with the clear teaching of Scripture that salvation depends not at all upon our own merit but entirely upon God free gift of grace.

Paul explains this when he says:-

Romans 4:16.....

and in Antioch of Pisidia:-

Acts 13:38-39.....

Therefore rest in the promise.....it comes by faith.