



Foundation of the Christian Faith
Course: Salvation
Lesson Seven

Title: Justification

Text: Romans 5:1 'Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:'

Introduction: Meaning of justification.

- The words just and justified come from the same root word in Greek as righteousness and righteous. Justified means to show to be righteous. Justification is sometimes explained as 'just as if I never sinned'. In one sense this is true but it can be misleading because it is much more than this. God declares the sinner righteous on the basis of his or her faith in Christ, and the sufficiency of the cross shows God to be just in doing so.
- Paul wrote that he was not ashamed of the gospel. Romans 1:16-17 'For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.' If Paul has to write that he is not ashamed of the gospel it shows that some were ashamed of the gospel.

Question: Why would anyone be ashamed of the gospel?

- (1) Because it does away with good works and shows we are all totally dependant upon Christ alone for salvation.
- (2) Because it puts everyone on the same level - 'all have sinned'.

There is no partiality with the gospel. We are all sinners.

The depth that a person falls into sin varies according to their particular character and circumstance, but all are sinners and in need of salvation.

People like to think they are better than others. But in regard to salvation all are brought to the same level by the gospel.

Song 'Amazing Grace'.

The story is told of a professional singer who was asked to sing this song but she refused to sing the words 'that saved a wretch like me', and she sang 'that saved a soul like mine'.

But if you cannot sing 'that saved a wretch like me', you cannot sing 'Amazing Grace'.

Example of justification as it is usually understood.

A person who is justified in a legal sense is one who has a just case and after presenting it has been found to be in the right. Justification is what he or she deserves after the presentation of the facts.

Sometimes a person can be guilty of a crime and yet have some justification for what they did.

A person who performs a revenge killing after years of abuse may have the penalty reduced because it was recognised that there was some justification for the crime.

This is how we usually look at justification.

But we never associate justification with someone who is guilty without any just cause.

Criminals are regarded as outcasts in society and a criminal record will stop a person from having the same opportunities in society as a person with a clean record.

They have no justification for what they did, they were caught and they are made to pay, and even after the penalty has been paid the guilty person is never justified.

Yet the scripture says 'Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:' (Romans 5:1)

This is a marvellous scripture because regarding my sin:

- (1) I am guilty
- (2) I deserve to be condemned
- (3) Even if I was able to suffer for my sin for all eternity, it can never remove the guilt.

Introductory Illustration: Speaking to prisoners.

I asked some prisoners in Romania what does justification mean?

One prisoner said 'it means to be right'.

I then asked them when a prisoner has served his sentence is he right concerning what he did to be put in prison?

They answered 'no'.

Then serving a sentence does not justify the guilty.

No matter how long a prisoner serves in prison he can never be justified.

I told them that even if a person is put to death it can never justify what he or she has done.

God justified His people. But this appears to be impossible.
How can a person who is guilty be 'righteous'?
The answer is they can't.
So how did God do it?

Exposition of Justification

- 1) The foundation of justification - The cross. The Lord Jesus was made sin for us on the cross.
- 2) The way of receiving justification - Through faith in Christ alone. Sin is crucified and buried with Christ.
- 3) The result of justification - New life in Christ. Through His resurrection the repentant sinner is raised to new life in Christ, 2 Corinthians 5:21.

Main Points:

1. What Justification is.

- (1) Justification cannot be earned. Justification is the free gift of God. Romans 3:24, 'Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:' Justification has nothing to do with works. It is imputed righteousness. Romans 4:3, 'For what says the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.' We are justified by faith and our faith is counted for righteousness. Romans 4:5, 'But to him that works not, but believeth on him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.' God declares us righteous through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- (2) Justification is a declaration of being righteous. '...counted for righteousness.' Romans 4:5b. The word 'counted' is the Greek word 'logizomai'. It means 'to put to the account of another'. The word comes from logos meaning 'word'. It is 'counted for righteousness' because faith in Christ is able to justify the sinner.
- (3) Justification has nothing to do with living a good life. All are on the same level, Romans 3:23, 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;' People always like to think of themselves as better than somebody else, but the gospel wipes out self-righteousness and shows that there is no difference between a vicious murderer or a gentle and caring person, all stand condemned without Christ.

Story: I recently preached to prisoners on death row. No matter how bad our sins may have been we can go into eternity fully justified. This is the good news of the gospel that because of the Lord Jesus Christ we can receive forgiveness and eternal life. There is no sin so bad that it can keep us out of heaven, but there is also no good work that is good enough to get us into heaven. Rejecting God's offer of salvation through Jesus Christ is the rejection of mankind's only hope of salvation. Hebrews 2:3, 'How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard *him*.'

Question: What about the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit?

Jesus said this sin would never be forgiven, Matthew 12:32.

When Jesus made this statement a great miracle had taken place, Matthew 12:22. The power of the Holy Spirit was leading people to Jesus.

The Pharisees were blinded because of their pride, their lust for money and the honour of the people.

This was the reason they hated Jesus and spoke evil of the Holy Spirit.

The greatest tragedy is when a person has rejected the Holy Spirit to the point of no return and God can no longer speak to them.

The most terrible words a person can hear are found in John 8:21, 24 '...you will die in your sins'.

If the Pharisees humbled themselves and repented then they also could have been justified by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

- (4) Justification does not mean having good works this comes afterwards. Ephesians 2:8-9 'For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.' A person who has done many good works may find it hard to believe that their good works count for nothing in regard to salvation. But this is the gospel that Paul was not ashamed to preach.

We have been created for good works that were prepared for us before we were born. Ephesians 2:10, 'For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.' But these works come after we have been justified.

Yet even the good works of believers have no benefit to the believer unless they are motivated by the love of God in us (agape love). 1 Corinthians 13:3 'And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profits me nothing.'

2. Justification is the product of resurrected life in Christ. Romans 4:25, 'Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.' Justification (Greek '*dikaiosis*') meaning pronounced righteous. The meaning of the verse is that Christ's death paid for our sins and through His resurrection we are raised to new life.

Illustration: The courtroom

Judge pronounces me guilty and the sentence is death.

The judge then says I will die with you if you will let me.

I have nothing to lose.

I am put to death with Him.

Death cannot hold Him because He is the eternal Son of God.

I raise with Him because my life and His are inseparably joined.

I stand in the courtroom. The judge says the guilty has been put to death you are not the same person. You are free from all guilt.

- a) Justification is an acquittal of guilt.
 - i) The sinner is justified because of the sufficiency of the cross, Romans 5:18, '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.'
 - ii) The sinner is acquitted because the old man is crucified with Christ, Romans 6:6-7, 'Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.'
 - iii) The new man is raised with Christ. God does not condone sin, He has done away with the sinner and raised a new man in newness of life.
 - b) Justification comes into effect through repentance and faith. Acts 20:21, 'Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.' It is a free gift, Romans 5:16, 'And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification.' Justification does not mean the sinner will never sin again. Sanctification is a process that will not be fully completed until Jesus comes. 1 John 1:10 'If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.'
 - c) Justification brings us into a new standing with God, Romans 5:1 'Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ'. Being declared justified we are brought into a new relationship with God. The sinner who was at enmity with God is now brought into right relationship through faith in the finished work of Christ.
 - (1) Justification gives us boldness to approach God. Ephesians 3:12 'In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.' We have access because we are in right relationship with God and are accepted by Him.
 - (2) Justification removes fear of judgement. There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, 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.' Because our sin has already been judged at the cross, we are free from all fear in Christ. We are freed from fear so that we can be led in all things by the love of God. 1 John 4:18, 'There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear: because fear has torment. He that fears is not made perfect in love.'
3. Justification fulfils the law and demonstrates the wisdom of God. God's people are seen to be rightly justified.
- a) Justification is based upon truth not supposition.
 - (1) Justification is a position that must be upheld by law. Justification cannot exist if the law still condemns the person who has been justified, Romans 8:33-34, 'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.'
 - (2) God must be just when He justifies His people, Romans 3:26 'To declare, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believes in Jesus.' God is justified in treating His people as righteous, 1 Timothy 3:16, 'And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.'
 - b) Justification reveals the wisdom of God and the righteousness of God.
 - (1) The wisdom of God is revealed to principalities and powers because of the Church, Ephesians 3: 10-11, 'To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:' God's wisdom is seen in that God has made a way for His people to be justified.
 - (2) The righteousness of God is revealed through the gospel. Romans 1:16-17 'For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. God's people are justified by faith in Christ. Justification can be summed up as, 'God's people are declared righteous by a righteous God who acts righteously'.

Summary:

- 1) Justification has nothing to do with self-righteousness but entirely through the imputed righteousness of Christ.

- 2) Justification has nothing to do with living a good life but the sinner is declared righteous on the basis of the death and resurrection of Christ. There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ.
- 3) Justification is not in word only. It is possible for God to justify His people because the condemnation of the law has been done away through the cross and those who are in Christ are raised to newness of life.

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