

Lesson 24

JUSTIFICATION

Compiled by Darrell Crow based upon personal studies, notes and prayer.

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JUSTIFICATION

After a sinner has been made righteous through faith in Jesus Christ, he is then justified by God.

Simply put, to justify is to declare righteous, to make one right with God. Justification is God's declaring those who receive Christ to be righteous, based on Christ's righteousness being imputed to the accounts of those who receive Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21 ²¹ *He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*). Justification is a legal act, wherein God deems the sinner righteous on the basis of Christ's righteousness. God can only declare righteous those who really are righteous. He cannot justify a sinner per se; He can and does justify sinners who have been made righteous in Christ.

It is said that God looks at the justified person as if he had never sinned, but that is only one half the truth. The believer has been forgiven of his sin and guilty, but that only makes him innocent. He needs to be made righteous also in order for God to declare him righteous. He needs the positive side of imputation as well as the negative.

Unlike Sanctification, Justification is not a process, but is a one-time act, complete and definitive.

Though justification as a principle is found throughout Scripture, the main passage describing justification in relation to believers is Romans 3:21-26: ²¹ *But now apart ^[a]from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²² even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those ^[b]who believe; for there is no distinction; ²³ for all ^[c]have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; ²⁵ whom God displayed publicly as a ^[d]propitiation ^[e]in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, ^[f]because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; ²⁶ for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who ^[g]has faith in Jesus*

We are justified, declared righteous, at the moment of our salvation. Justification does not make us righteous, but rather pronounces us righteous. Our righteousness comes from placing our faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. His sacrifice covers our sin, allowing God to see us as perfect and unblemished. Because as believers we are in Christ, God sees Christ's own righteousness when He looks at us. This meets God's demands for perfection; thus, He declares us righteous—He justifies us.

Romans 5:18-19 sums it up well: ¹⁸ *So then as through one transgression ^[a]there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness ^[b]there resulted justification of life to all men. ¹⁹ For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One*

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the many will be made righteous.” It is because of justification that the peace of God can rule in our lives. It is because of justification that believers can have assurance of salvation. It is the fact of justification that enables God to begin the process of sanctification—the process by which God makes us in reality what we already are positionally. “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1).

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Justification by faith is what separates biblical Christianity from all other belief systems. In every religion, and in some branches of what is called “Christianity,” man is working his way to God. Only in true, biblical Christianity is man saved as a result of grace through faith. Only when we get back to the Bible do we see that justification is by faith, apart from works.

The word *justified* means “pronounced or treated as righteous.” For a Christian, justification is the act of God not only forgiving the believer’s sins but imputing to him the righteousness of Christ. The Bible states in several places that justification only comes through faith.

- *Romans 5:1* ⁵ Therefore, having been justified by faith, ^[a] we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.
- *Galatians 3:24* ²⁴ Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.

Justification is not earned through our own works; rather, we are covered by the righteousness of Jesus Christ. The Christian, being declared righteous, is thus freed from the guilt of sin.

- ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith; and ^[a] that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; *Ephesians 2:8*
- ⁵ He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, *Titus 3:5*

Justification is a completed work of God, and it is instantaneous, as opposed to sanctification, which is an ongoing process of growth by which we become more Christlike. (*1 Thessalonians 5:23²³ Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 1:18; ¹⁸ For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who ^[a]are perishing, but to us who ^[b]are being saved it is the power of God.*)

The Bible describes justification in a sevenfold fashion:

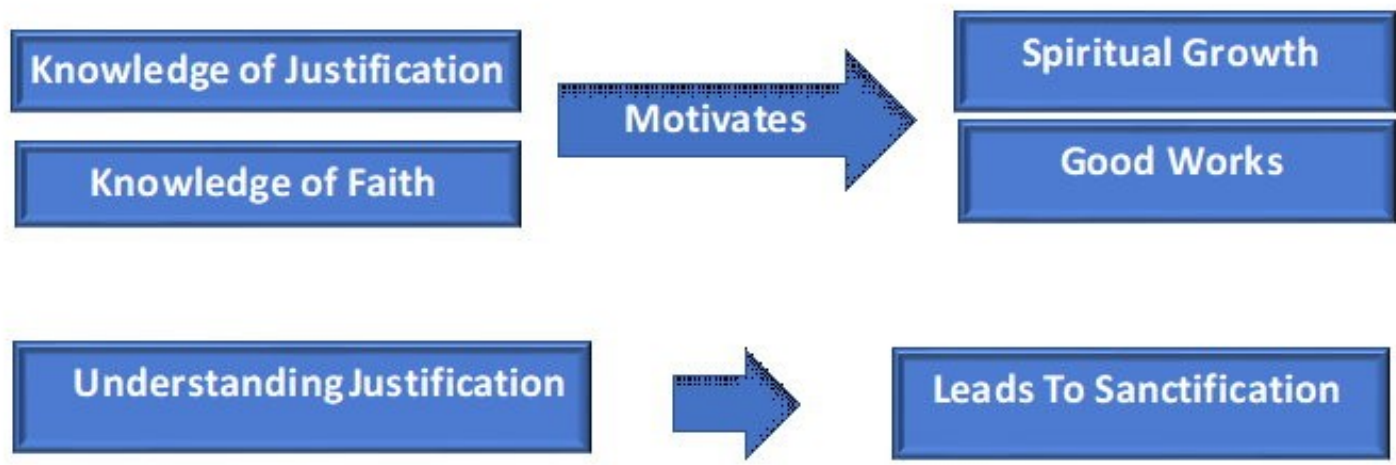
1. A justified position is a grace gift.
 - *Romans 3:24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus*
 - *Only a just God could be its source Romans 3:26 for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who ^[a]has faith in Jesus.*
2. The righteous position is appropriated by faith and brings peace between God and man
 - *Romans 3:28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.*
 - *Romans 5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,*
3. It is possible only upon the foundation of the shed blood of Christ
 - *Romans 5:9 Much more then, having now been justified ^[a]by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.*
4. Only in Christ can one have a justified position
 - *1 Corinthians 6:11 Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.*
5. This work of God is applied to the believing sinner by the Holy Spirit. (1 Corinthians 6:11)
 - *1 Corinthians 6:11 Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.*
6. The outward manifestation of the justified position is a changed life, marked by the works that genuine faith produces
 - *James 2:21-26 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? (22) You see that faith was working with his works, and [a]as a result of the works, faith was perfected; (23) and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God. (24) You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. (25) In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? (26) For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.*
7. John beautifully describes the justified person with these words,
 - *1 John 4:17 By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world.*

Every person should want to have boldness of speech and to be free of anxiety when he stands before God’s judgment throne. The believer has it. “As He is, so are we.” Just as Christ is (in heaven), so are we (in this world). Jesus is accepted before God; so we are, because we are in Jesus, righteous and declared righteous. In other words, we are as good as Christ is, in our spiritual position. If we could lose our position before God in this world, then potentially, Christ could lose His tool. Both are impossible. No wonder Paul wrote, “³³ Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies; “ (Romans 8:33)

The law of double jeopardy states that a man cannot be tried or punished twice for the same crime. The believer will not be tried or punished either because he has already been declared righteous by God and Christ was punished for his crime. God cannot and will not require a double punishment for our sin.

Sanctification occurs after justification.

Understanding justification is important as it is the very knowledge of justification and of grace that motivates good works and spiritual growth; thus, justification leads to sanctification. Also, the fact that justification is a finished work of God means that Christians have assurance of their salvation. In God’s eyes, believers have the righteousness necessary to gain eternal life.



Once a person is justified, there is nothing else he needs in order to gain entrance into heaven. Since justification comes by faith in Christ, based on His work on our behalf, our own works are disqualified as a means of salvation (Romans 3:28 ²⁸^[a]For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works ^[b]of the Law).

Without an understanding of justification by faith alone, we cannot truly perceive this gift of grace—God’s “unmerited favor” becomes “merited” in our minds, and we begin to think we deserve salvation. The doctrine of justification by faith helps us maintain “pure devotion to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:3). Holding to justification by faith keeps us from falling for the lie that we can earn heaven. There is no ritual, no sacrament, no deed that can make us worthy of the righteousness of Christ. It is only by His grace, in response to our faith, that God has credited to us the holiness of His Son.

- Habakkuk 2:4 “Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; But the righteous will live by his ^[a]faith.
- Romans 1:17 ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed ^[a]from faith to faith; as it is written, “^[b]BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.”
- Galatians 3:11 ¹¹ Now that no one is justified ^[a]by ^[b]the Law before God is evident; for, “^[c]THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.”
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- *Hebrews 10:38 BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH; AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM.*
- *2 Corinthians 11:3 But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.*